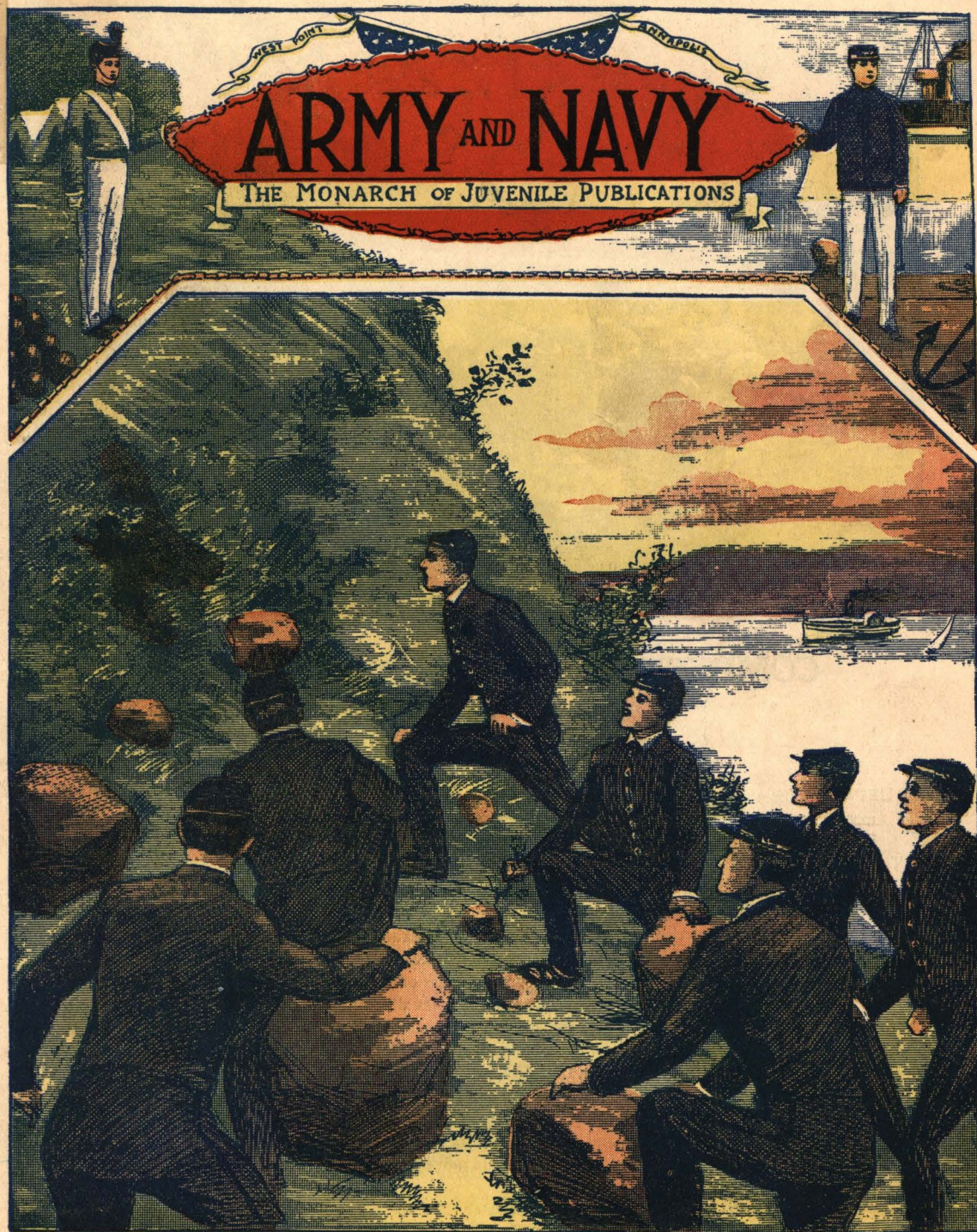


Nº 26

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.

Two military and naval cadet novelettes
by graduates of West Point and Annapolis.

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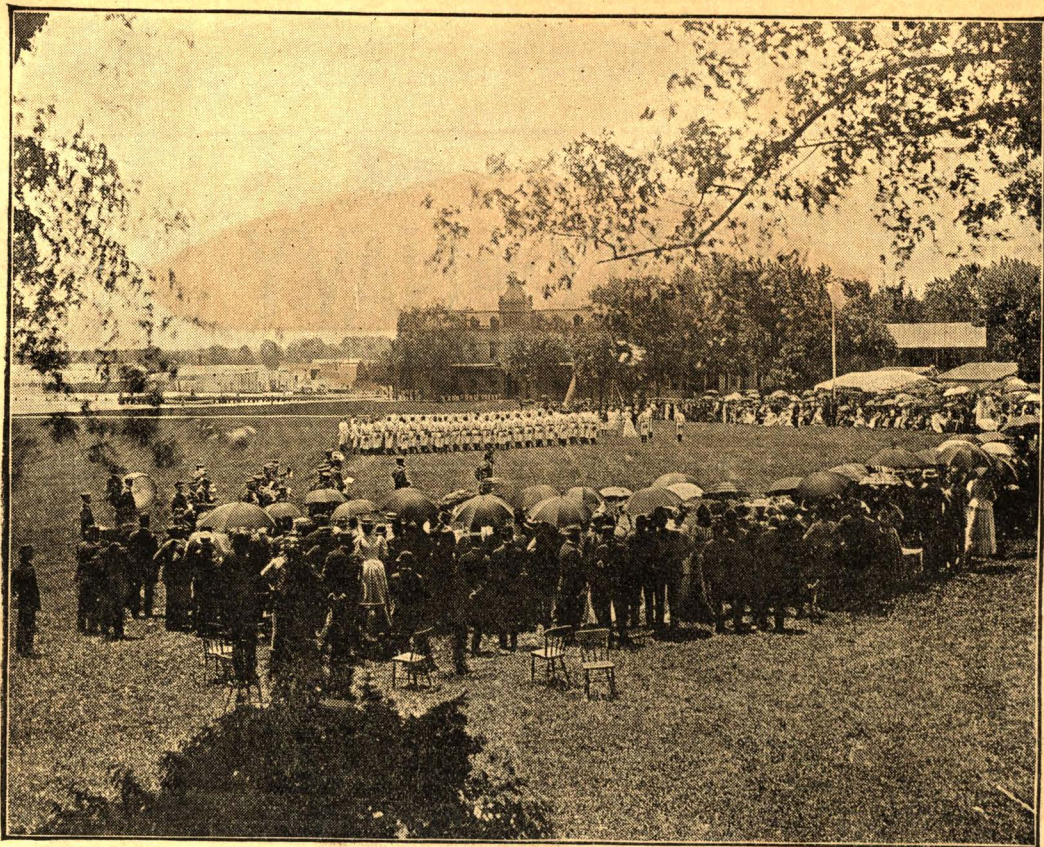
THE SEVEN CADETS SCRAMBLED UP THE ROCKS AT THEIR UTMOST SPEED,
(“Mark Mallory’s Misfortune,” by Lieut. Garrison, U. S. A. Complete in this number.)

Vol. 1 }
No. 26 }

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COMPETITIVE DRILL FOR THE FLAG.

By JOSEPH COBLENTZ GROFF.

DURING graduation week at the United States Naval Academy, the early part of June, there are always a great many very pleasing social events and drills that help to make up for the many trials and hardships of cadet life throughout the year.

The most important of all the events, next to the graduation exercises themselves, is the competitive drill for the flag, and the cadets look forward to it with unusual pleasure and anxiety as to the result.

The day allotted to it is the one just preceding graduation day, and by that time all who expect to visit Annapolis to attend the graduation exercises are on hand and ready to applaud the efforts of their cadet friends. The entire morning is devoted to the competition and the preparation for the same.

The competition is to decide which one of the four companies of the battalion is to carry the colors during the next academic year, and this is an honor which officers and privates alike most keenly covet and do their best to win.

For weeks preceding the competition each captain has been taking advantage of every opportunity to improve the condition and bearing of the cadets under his command, and the early morning of the day itself finds the companies being mustered in the armory and given their final instructions.

They are marched to some place of concealment in the grounds and told to await the orders of the judges. The band is stationed at a convenient place on the parade ground to furnish music for the marching, hosts of visitors and friends are assembled along the side lines, and at last the competition begins.

One by one the companies are put through the requisite movements, and when the last one has marched from the field all await the decision of the judges.

Meantime the four competing captains have met privately and have voted for some lady, who, of course, has proved herself to be a general favorite among the cadets, to present the flag to the winning company.

The decision is arrived at, and amidst deafening applause the announcement is made and passed along from one to another.

The battalion is marched in line to the front of the judges' stand, a hollow square is formed with the winning company in front, and the flag is presented to the lucky captain by the lady chosen for that pleasant but embarrassing duty.

After three lusty cheers given with a will by the cadets of the other three companies, the most important affair of the week becomes a thing of the past.

ARMY AND NAVY.

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION FOR OUR BOYS.

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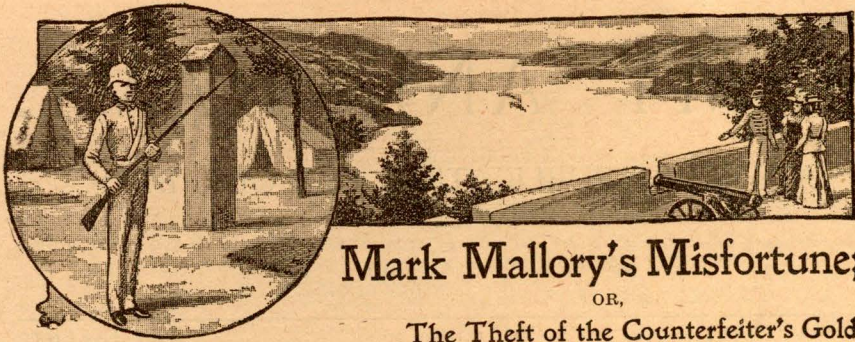
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A NEW SERIAL.

IN the next number of the Army and Navy will be published the opening chapters of a new serial by an author well-known to our readers. It will be entitled "The Cryptogram; a Story of North-West Canada." The writer is William Murray Graydon, whose charming stories, "A Legacy of Peril" and "In Forbidden Nepaul" has made him a prime favorite among our readers.



Mark Mallory's Misfortune;

OR,

The Theft of the Counterfeiter's Gold.

By Lieut. Frederick Garrison, U. S. A.

CHAPTER I.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE LOSS.

"This is where you wake up and find yourself rich; how do you like it?"

The person who asked the question was yawning sleepily as he sat up from his bed, a pile of blankets on the floor of his tent. He was a handsome, athletic-looking lad, some eighteen years of age, and he was speaking to three others who were also just in the act of arising.

They were in one of the tents of Camp McPherson, as the summer home of the West Point cadets was known that year. It was about five o'clock one Sunday morning in August, and the booming echo of the reveille gun was still upon the air. Down by the color line a drum was still rattling, with a fife to keep it company. And throughout the camp cadets were springing up to dress, just as were the four we noticed.

There is no tent room in West Point for the man who likes to lie in bed and doze for half an hour in the morning; cadets have five minutes to dress in, and they have to be out in the company street lined up for roll call at the end of that time. And there is no danger of their failing about it, either. They tell a good story up there about one fond mother who introduced her young hopeful, a soon-to-be plebe, to the commandant of cadets,

and hoped that they wouldn't have any trouble getting "Montmorency dear" up in the morning; they never could get him up at home.

But to return to the four A Company plebes who were meanwhile flinging on their clothes and performing their hasty toilets.

The lad who propounded the question was Mark Mallory, our old friend, the unhazable plebe. The one who answered it was Jeremiah Powers, the wild and woolly cowboy from Texas; and Texas vowed he liked being rich "durnation" well. He got no chance to explain why or wherefore, however, for by that time he was outside of the tent, and the resplendent cadet officer was giving his stentorian order:

"Tenshun company!"

At which signal the merry groups of cadets changed into an immovable line of figures stiff as ramrods.

There were some plebes in that company, and some over in Company B, too, who were inching themselves that morning to make sure that they were not dreaming and had not been dreaming during all the night's adventures they remembered. Those adventures included counterfeiters, skeletons and mysterious caves, and buried treasures of gold—enough to make anybody wonder if it were not all a dream.

There is strength and confidence however in union; and on the march down to breakfast some whispered inquiries proved that there were seven plebes in the class who had all had that same "dream" last night. They were the members of the Seven Devils, West Point's first and only secret society, a desperate band of adventurous and defiant plebes who much preferred to haze than to be hazed. Mark Mallory was their leader and head devil, "Texas" their first lieutenant; and the whole seven of them were by this time the most hated plebes in the Academy.

They did not mind that, however; they were having a pretty good time. Yesterday they had spent their Saturday half holiday walking in the woods, when the adventures alluded to in the beginning of this story had occurred. They had discovered a secret cave, once the home of a gang of counterfeiters, who had been caught therein by a trap door and suffocated. Subsequent investigation that night had discovered a large chest of buried coin, five dollar gold pieces. They were genuine, too, so proven by the analysis of Parson Stanard, the chemist, geologist, and all-round encyclopaedic genius of the seven.

The plebes had come back to camp late last night, or rather early this same morning, scarcely able to realize what had happened. They were still striving to realize it all as they sat whispering to each other in Mess Hall. They were rich, all of them. How much they had none of them had any idea. The learned Parson had informed them—and he didn't have to go to a book to find it out, either, that a pound of gold is worth two hundred and fifty dollars. Allowing two hundred pounds to that box, which was a modest guess indeed, left some seven thousand dollars to each of them, a truly enormous fortune for a boy, especially a West Point plebe who is supposed to have no use for money at all.

Cadets do their purchasing on "check book," as it is called, and their bills are deducted from their salaries. And though they do smuggle in some contraband bills occasionally they have no way of making use of large sums. That was the problem the Seven Devils were discussing through

the meal and while they were busily sprucing up their tents for "Sunday morning inspection."

Texas was for quitting "the durnation ole place" at a jump and making for the plains where a fellow could have a little fun when he wanted to. The fact that he had signed an "engagement for service," or any such trifle as that, made no difference to him, and in fact there is little doubt that he would have skipped that morning had it not been for one fact—he couldn't leave Mark.

"Dogone his boots!" growled Texas, "ef he had any nerve he'd come along! But ef he won't, durnation, I s'pose I got to let that air money lie idle."

After which disconsolate observation Texas fell to polishing the mirror that hung on his tent pole and said nothing more.

"Think of Texas running away!" laughed Mark. "Think of him not having Corporal Jasper to come in on Sunday mornings and lecture him for talking too much instead of sprucing up his tent as a cadet should. Think of him not having Captain Fischer to march him round to church after that and civilize him! Think of the yearlings having nobody to lick 'em any more! Think of Bull Harris, our beloved enemy, who hates us worse than I do warm cod liver oil, having nobody to fool him every once in a while and get him wild!"

Mark observed by that time from the twitching of his excitable friend's fingers and the light that danced in his eye that his last hit had drawn blood. Texas was cured in a moment of all desire to leave West Point. For was not Bull Harris, "that durnation ole coyote of a yearlin'," a low, cowardly rascal who had tried every contemptible trick upon Mark that his ingenuity could invent, and who hadn't had half his malignity and envy knocked out of him yet? And Texas go away? Not much!

Parson Stanard, the grave and dignified Bostonian, was heard from next. The Parson knew of a most extraordinary collection of fossils from the sub-carboniferous period. The Parson had been saving up for a year to buy those fossils, and now he meant to do it. He swore it by Zeus, and by Apollo, and by each one

of the "Olympians" in turn. Also the Parson meant to do something handsome by that wonderful Cyathophylloid coral found by him in a sandstone of Tertiary origin. The Parson thought it would be a good idea to get up a little pamphlet on that most marvelous specimen, a pamphlet treating very learnedly upon the "distribution of the Cyathophylloid according to previous geological investigations and the probable revolutionary and monumental effects of the new modifications thereof." The Parson had an idea he'd have a high old time writing that treatise.

Further discourse as to the probable uses of the treasure was cut short by the entrance of the inspecting officer, who scattered slaughter and trembling from his eye. Methusalem Z. Chilvers, "the farmer," alias Sleepy, the fourth occupant of the tent, was responsible for disorder that week and the way he caught it was a caution. He was so disgusted that as usual he vowed he was going to take his money back to Kansas and raise "craps." After which the drum sounded and they all marched down to chapel.

A delightful feeling of independence comes with knowing you are rich. Perhaps you have never tried it, but the Seven Devils were trying it just then. They beamed down contentedly on irate cadet corporals and unfriendly yearlings with an air of conscious superiority that seemed to say, "If you only knew." Of the seven there were only two who were at all used to the sensation of being wealthy. Texas' "dad," "The Hon. Scrap Powers, o' Hurricane County," owned a few hundred thousand head of cattle, and Chauncey, "the dude," was a millionaire from New York; but all the others were quite poor. Mark was calculating just then what a satisfaction he meant to have in sending some of that money to his mother, to whom it would be a very welcome present indeed.

He was thinking of that in the course of the afternoon, when church and likewise dinner had passed, leaving the plebes at leisure. And so he proposed to them that they take a walk to pass the time and incidentally bring some of that buried wealth back with them. Nothing could have suited the seven better, as it happened. They were all anxiety again to

get up to that cave and hear those gold coins jingle once more. To cut the story short, they went.

It was a merry party that set out through the woods that afternoon. The Seven Devils were usually merry, as we know, but they had extra causes just then. Everything was going about as well for them as things in the world could be expected to go. And besides this, Parson Stanard, who was a well spring of fun at all times, was in one of his most solemn and therefore laughable moods at present.

The thought had occurred to the Parson, as his first sordid flush of delight at having wealth had passed, that after all he was in a very unscholarly condition indeed. The very idea of a man of learning being rich! Why it was preposterous; where was all the starving in garrets of genius and the pinching poverty that was always the fate of the true patrons of Minerva. That worried the Parson more than you can imagine; he felt himself a traitor to his chosen profession. And with much solemn abjuration and considerable classical circumlocution he called the seven's attention to that deplorable state of affairs. Search the records of history as he could, the Parson could not find a parallel for his own unfortunate condition. And he wound up the afternoon's discussion by wishing, yea, by Zeus, that he could be poor and happy once more.

Master Dewey, the prize joker of the crowd, suggested very solemnly that nobody was going to compel the unfortunate Parson to claim his share, "b'gee;" that he (Dewey) would be pleased to take it if he were only paid enough to make it worth while. But somehow or other the Parson didn't fall into that plan very readily; perhaps he didn't think Dewey really meant it.

Parson Stanard did not need to worry about having that money, as an actual fact. He was soon to find himself relieved of it with startling abruptness. The way of the discovery was as follows.

Still chatting merrily, the seven had made their way through the mile or two of woods that lay between the post and the cave. The entrance to the latter was in a high cliff that fronted on the Hudson

shore, a small black hole hidden by a growth of bushes. As they drew near to it the plebes were startled to notice that the ground at the foot of the rock was marked and torn with footprints.

The seven had not done that, they knew, for they had been of all things most careful to leave not the least trace that should lead any one to suspect the presence of their secret cavern. And consequently when they saw the state of the ground there was but one thought, a horrible thought that flashed over every one of them. Somebody had been in their cave! And during the night!

Almost as one man, the seven made a dash for the entrance, scrambling up the rocks. There was never a thought of danger in the mind of any one of them, never a thought that perhaps some accomplice of the dead counterfeiters had come to get the gold, might now be inside, armed against the intruders. They had time to think of but one thing. Somebody had seen them go in there last night, had seen them find the treasure! And now—and now?

Texas was the first of them to get to the entrance, for Mark was lame with an injured arm. He flung his body through the hole, half falling to the floor on the other side. The rest heard him stumbling about and they halted, silent, every one of them, scarcely breathing for anxiety and suspense. They heard Texas strike a match. They heard him run across the floor—

And a moment later came a cry that struck them almost dumb with horror.

"Dogone it, the money's all gone!"

CHAPTER II.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE THIEF.

The state of mind of the seven can not be described. A moment before they had been upon a pinnacle of success and happiness. And now it seemed that they had climbed but that their fall might be all the more unbearable. All their ambitions and plans, all the fun they meant to have—it was too terrible to be true!

It was half with a feeling of incredulity that one after another they climbed up to the opening and went in. Not one of them

could quite bring himself to believe that the whole thing was not a horrible delusion, a nightmare. But when they got inside they found that it was too true.

There was the deep trench that Parson Stanard had dug; there was the spade he had dug it with, the tracks of the others who had gathered anxiously about to watch him. There was even one of the bright glittering gold pieces half hidden in the dirt, a horrible mockery, as it appeared to them; for the big wooden chest that had been full to the brim with gold pieces, was gone, and the money with it. And all the hopes of the Seven Devils were gone, too.

At first they stood and stared, gasping; and then they gazed about the place in horror, thinking that surely they must find the chest lying somewhere else. But it was not there. They dashed around the room, hunting in every corner of the place, even in the locked cell, where the ghastly skeletons lay grinning at them as if in delight. But there was not a sign of the chest, nor of any one who could have taken it.

And then suddenly Mark noticed a footprint in the soft earth just underneath the entrance that told him the story.

"They've taken it out!" he cried.

Feverish with disappointment and impatience, the seven scrambled out again through the hole. There on the ground was the same footprint, larger than any of theirs. It did not take half an eye to see that. There, too, was a great three-cornered dent in the ground, showing where the chest had been dropped. And there were finger marks of the hand that had scooped up the fallen coins to put them back into the chest.

Texas, plainsman and cowboy, had often told stories of how he had followed a half-washed out trail for miles across an otherwise trackless prairie. He was on his knees now studying every mark and sign, his eyes fairly starting from his head with excitement. And suddenly he sprang to his feet as he noticed a trail a short way off, a deep, smooth rut worn in the earth.

"A wheelbarrow!" roared he.

A wheelbarrow it was, for a fact. And the track of it lay through the woods to the river. Texas had started on a run,

without saying another word, and the rest were at his heels.

The men who had taken that heavy chest down that steep forest slope to the river must have had hard work. Any one could see that as he looked at the mark of the wheel. It would run down a slippery rock and plunge deep into the soft earth at the bottom. It would run into a fallen log, or plunge through a heavy thicket. And once, plain as day was written a story of how the chest had fallen off and the heap of scattered coins all been gathered up again.

These things the plebes barely noticed in their haste. They ran almost all the way. It was perhaps two hundred yards to the river, and there was a steep, shelving bank, at the bottom of which was a little pebbly beach. Down the bank the wheelbarrow had evidently been run, half falling, upsetting the box once more, and necessitating the same labor of gathering up the coins. One of them had been left in the sand.

The poor plebes realized then how hopeless was their search. Deep in the sand was the mark of a boat's keel, and they knew that the work of trailing was at an end. Their treasure was gone forever, stolen during the few hours since they had left it last.

"There's no use shedding any tears about it," said Mark at last, when the state of affairs had had time to be realized. "We've simply got it to bear. Somebody probably saw us leave the camp last night and followed us up here. And when they saw that treasure they just helped themselves."

There is little that will make most people madder than to be told "never mind" when they feel they have something to be very much worried over. The seven did mind a great deal. They sat and stared at each other with looks of disgust. Even the Parson (who ought to have been happy) wore a funereal look, and the only one who had a natural expression was Indian, the fat boy from Indianapolis. That was because Indian looked horrified and lugubrious always.

They wandered disconsolately about the spot where the boat had landed for perhaps five minutes, gazing longingly at the trace of the boat in the sand and

wishing they could see it in the water as well, before any new development came. But the development was a very startling one when it came.

"Commit a crime and the earth is made of glass. Commit a crime and it seems as if a coat of snow fell on the ground, such as reveals in the woods the track of every partridge and fox and squirrel and mole. You cannot wipe out the foot track, you cannot draw up the ladder, so as to leave no inlet or clue. Always some damning circumstance transpires. The laws and substances of nature become penalties to the thief."

It was Emerson who wrote that; if it were not true there could be no use for such a man as a detective. But in this case it took no detective to read the secret; it was written plain as day to all eyes in an object that lay on the ground.

Mark was the first to notice it. He saw a gleam of metal in the sand, and he thought it was one of the coins. But a moment later he saw that it was not, and he sprang forward, trembling with eagerness and sudden hope.

A moment later he held up before his startled companions a handsome gold watch. They sprang forward to look at it. Crying out in surprise as they did so, and a moment later he turned it quickly over. Written upon the back were three letters in the shape of a monogram—a monogram they had seen before on clothing, worn by a yearling, and that yearling was—

"Bull Harris!"

The scene that followed then precludes description. The seven danced about on the sand, fairly howled for what was joy at one moment, anger at another. There was joy that they had found a clue, that they knew where to hunt for their treasure; and anger at that latest of the many contemptible tricks that yearling had tried.

What Bull Harris had done scarcely needs to be mentioned here. He had tried every scheme that his revengeful cunning could suggest to even matters with that hated Mark Mallory. He had tried a dozen plans to get Mark expelled, a dozen to get him brutally hazed. And they had all been cowardly tricks in which the yearling took good care to run no danger.

This was the last, the climax; he had stolen their treasure by night, and what was almost as bad had he found their secret cavern. And as Mark stood and stared at that watch he clutched in his hand he registered a vow that Bull Harris should be paid for his acts in a way that he would not forget if he lived a thousand years.

And then he turned to the others.

"Come on fellows," he said. "We can't gain anything by standing her. Let's go back and watch Bull Harris like so many cats until we find out what he's done with our money."

The seven turned and made their way through the woods once more, talking over the situation and their own course as they went. They had room for but one idea in their heads just now. They must find out where that money was and get it back, if it was the last thing they ever did in their lives.

It was clear that the hiding-place could not be very far away, and that Bull and his cronies must go to it again. The seven had left the place at about one in the morning, and reveille came at five; that gave but four hours in which Bull, who it was presumed, had watched them digging, had returned to West Point, gotten a boat and wheelbarrow and taken the treasure away. He could not have taken it a great distance in that time.

Another question was, who had helped him? Probably some of his gang, Mark thought, until he chanced to remember that Bull had another ally just then. He had a cousin, a youth even less lovely than he staying at the hotel. And then came another vague idea—perhaps he had the treasure there. Bull could surely not have it in his tent, and perhaps he had been afraid to bury it.

That was but a faint hope, yet Mark decided in a moment to follow it up. He thought of a scheme. Grace Fuller was at the hotel, and also "George," the Fuller's family butler. Grace Fuller was a beautiful girl, the belle of West Point, whose life Mark had been so fortunate as to save, earning thereby her gratitude and sincere friendship. George was a merry, red-faced Irishman, who had once fired off some cannon at night for the plebes and scared West Point out of its boots. Mark

determined after a moment's consultation that George was the man to investigate this clue for them.

As I said, it was only a possibility, a very bare one. Mark strolled around near the hotel late in the afternoon when he returned, keeping a sharp lookout for the man just mentioned. When he saw him he whispered to him and strolled slowly away.

"George," said Mark, hurriedly, when the other joined him, "do you know which is Cadet Harris' cousin, the young man who's staying in the hotel there?"

"Yes, sir," said the butler. "His name's Mr. Chandler. Why?"

"I've got a secret," said Mark, briefly. "It's something important, and I want you to help me, without saying a word to any one. Get one of the women, his chambermaid if you can, to find out if he's got a box in his room."

And the butler chuckled to himself.

"Bless you, sir," he said. "I can tell you that now. It's the talk of the place, among the help. One of the girls saw Mr. Harris and his cousin carrying a heavy box up to his room just before reveille this morning."

And as Mark turned away again he was ready to shout aloud for joy.

CHAPTER III.

STEALING FROM THIEVES.

"Now," said Mark, when he rejoined his companions, "we've got pretty definite information to go on with now. Mr. Chandler's got our money in his room. The question is what are we to do next?"

The plebes were sitting over in a secluded corner of Trophy Point discussing this. Texas doubled up his fists with an angry durnation.

"Git it back!" growled he, with a characteristic disregard of details.

"But how?" said Mark. "Of course we could have him arrested, for he knew the money was ours. But if we did he'd tell how we skipped camp to dig it, and we'd be dismissed from West Point. Then there'd be the deuce to pay."

"One case where I'd be thankful I'm not in the habit of paying my debts," observed Dewey, tacking on a stray b'gee as usual. "As to Bull and his cousin, I

say we punch their faces till they give up the money. Punch their faces, b'gee!"

"Dog gone their boots!" growled Texas.

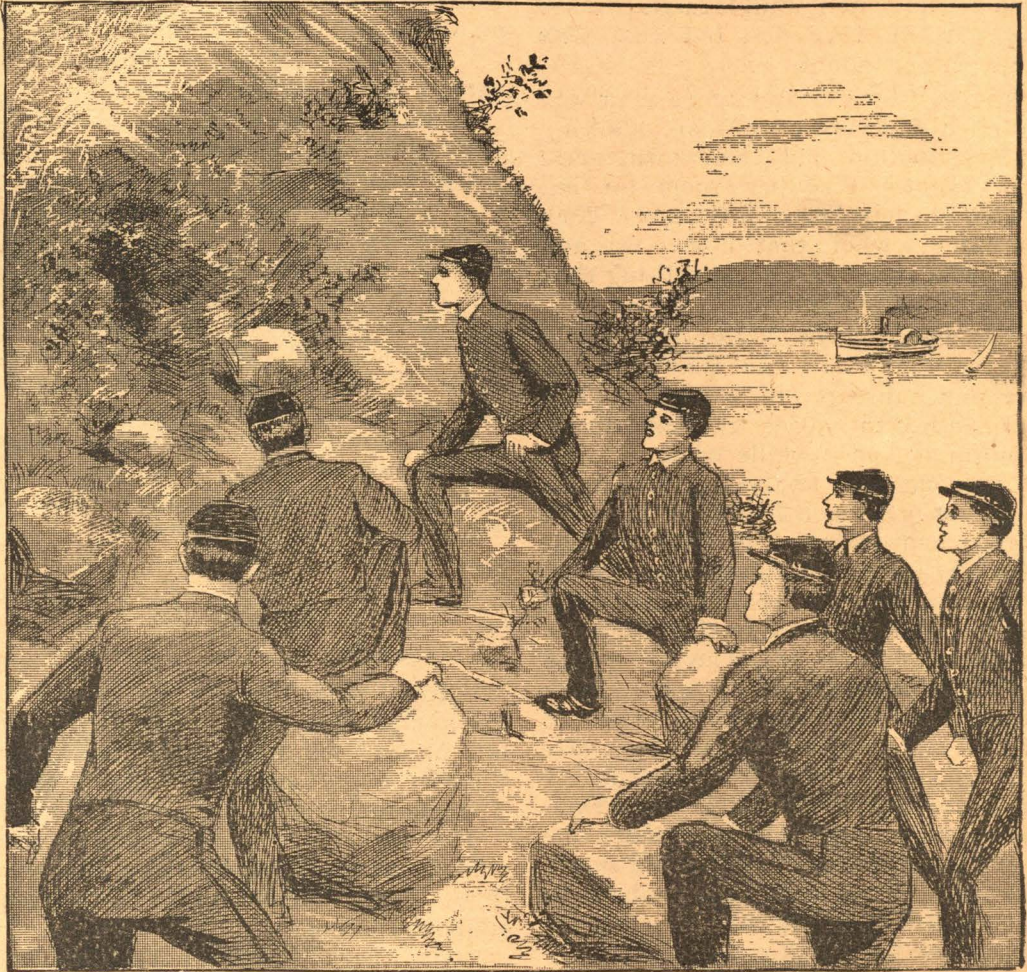
"That might hurt their boots," laughed Mark, "but it wouldn't do us any good. I haven't heard any feasible suggestion yet. You know possession is nine points, and they've got that."

It was Mark Mallory who finally hit upon a plan that seemed possible. It was

we turn burglars and get our money out of there."

And Mr. Jeremiah Powers let out a whoop just then that made the windows rattle over in that self-same hotel. Jeremiah Powers hadn't been quite so excited since the time he rode out and tried to hold up the cadet battalion. When the others assented to the plan and vowed their aid, he nearly had a fit.

After that the seven did almost nothing



THE SEVEN CADETS SCRAMBLED UP THE ROCKS AT THEIR UTMOST SPEED (page 1205).

a wild and woolly plan, too, and it took Texas with a rush.

"They stole it from us," said Mark. "I don't see what better we can do than steal it back again."

"You don't mean——" gasped Dewey—"b'gee——"

"Yes, I do," laughed Mark. "And I mean this very night, too. I mean that

but glance at their watches during the fast waning Sunday afternoon. There was no parade to pass the time. It seemed an age between the sunset gun and supper; and as for tattoo, all the Parson's much vaunted geologic periods, times, ages and eras, Silurian, Devonian, Carboniferous, Treassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous, were not to be compared with

it in length. When they did finally get into bed they waited another age for taps to sound, and another for the tac to inspect, and another till the sentry called half-past ten, and another for eleven, and another for half-past that, and then twelve, and they couldn't stand it any longer.

No matter if it was a rather early hour for burglars to begin operations, they could not wait any longer. Not a man of them had gone to sleep (except Indian), such was their impatience. They got up, all of them, and began to dress hastily, putting on some old clothes a drum orderly had smuggled in. And a few minutes later that momentous expedition crossed the sentry post unseen and sat down in old Fort Clinton.

Nobody means to say for a moment that there was one of them who was not badly scared just then. None of them was used to playing burglar and they could not but see that it was a very serious and dangerous business at best. Old hands at it often get into serious scrapes, so what shall we say of greenhorns? The only one of them who had ever "done a job" was Texas, who had once gotten Mark out of an almighty bad scrape that way.

They discussed the programme they were to follow. They knew where the room was and that it could be reached by climbing the piazza pillars to the roof above. Texas had climbed those pillars once before, and he had a rope to help Mark and the rest up this time. After that they were to enter that room, and Texas, the desperate cowboy, was to hold young Chandler up till the deed was done. That was all, very simple. But, oh, how they shivered!

They were ugly enough looking fellows externally. The clothes they wore were old and tough looking, turned up at the collars. Mark had in his free hand a dark lantern, and Texas was clutching in his pocket a heavy forty-four calibre which he meant to use. They had masks, every one of them, or such masks as they could make out of their handkerchiefs. And any body who saw them stealing across the grass to the hotel grounds would have been very much alarmed indeed.

Fortunately it was a cloudy night, black as pitch.

Even the white trousers of the lonely sentries who paced the walks about the camp were scarcely distinguishable. The hotel was a black, indistinct mass looming up in front of them. The chances of recognition under such circumstances were few, the plebes realized with a sense of relief.

Once hiding close under the shadow of the building they wasted but little time in consultation. It was a creepy sort of business altogether, but then they had started, and so there was nothing to do but go right ahead. Most of them had recovered from their first nervousness at this crisis anyway, of course excepting poor Indian, who had seated himself flat on the ground in a state of collapse. Dewey was behind him ready to grab him by the mouth in case one of Indian's now famous howls of terror should show any signs of breaking loose.

Texas and Mark meanwhile were proceeding calmly to business. The pillars were very wide and high, and Mark foresaw trouble in getting himself up them with his crippled arm. And there was still more trouble in the case of the gentleman from Indianapolis, whose fat little legs wouldn't reach half-way around. The difficulty was fortunately removed by the finding of a short ladder in back of the house. A very few minutes later the seven anxious plebes were lying upon the piazza roof.

They wormed their way up close to the wall of the building where they were safe from observation. And while Mark devoted himself to keeping Indian quiet Texas set out to reconnoitre. Poor Indian didn't want to come, and worse yet, he didn't want to stay. He felt safer in the hotel as a burglar than all alone outside in the darkness, and he had an idea that even Camp McPherson wasn't safe without Mark. "Alas, poor Indian!"

Meanwhile as to Texas. Did you ever walk on a tin roof? If you have you can imagine what a soul-stirring, ear-splitting operation it is, at midnight, especially when you are in burglar's costume, with a revolver in one hand and a dark lantern in the other. Every single individual bit of tin on the flooring seemed to

have a new and entirely original kind of sound to make, and the six watchers quailed at every one of them.

Texas was hunting for the window that led into the hall of the building. The room they meant to enter was unfortunately on the other side. They had to force the window, creep down the hall and get into that room. If they could simply have entered it from a window, they might have gotten out of this foolish scrape a good deal more simply than they did.

Texas managed to find the window without much trouble, and fortunately he found it open. He beckoned the others silently, and they crept one by one down to the place, Indian making twice as much noise as any one because he weighed more. At any rate they climbed through the window and into the lonely hall of the hotel, where they stood and listened anxiously. They had not been very quiet, but they did not believe they had awakened any one; and after this they could be quieter.

They would have been very much scared and terrified plebes, more so, all of them, than was Master Smith now, if they could have known the true state of affairs. For they had awakened some one. And though they had not the least suspicion of it, a pair of sharp eyes had been watching their every move.

They were very beautiful eyes, too. They belonged to a young girl, a girl with lovely features and bright golden hair. She was sleeping in one of the rooms on the second floor that fronted on the piazza, and the sound that awakened her had been the gentle tap upon the roof when the ladder had been raised. She sat up in bed, and a moment later rose and crept tremblingly to the window. Peering out into the darkness she saw the top of the ladder, and a moment later saw a masked face appear above it, and a masked figure climb up and creep into the shadow of the building. Another followed it instantly, and another; and then without a sound the girl dodged down and stole across the floor of the room.

She crept silently to a trunk that was in one corner; she raised the lid and fumbled about anxiously in the darkness for

something. It felt cold, like polished steel, when she found what she wanted. She picked it up and slipped a wrapper over her shoulders, then softly opened the door of her room to peer out into the hall.

Meanwhile as to the seven whom we left standing inside of the window down near the other end. They were, as has been said, entirely unconscious of what has just been mentioned. Texas had crept forward and extinguished the light that burned in the hall, and they were now standing in total darkness but for the single ray of the lantern. They held a whispered conversation as to what they should do next.

Parson Stanard volunteered to pick the lock of Chandler's door; he wasn't a burglar by profession, by Zeus, said he, but he believed in a gentleman of culture knowing something about all the arts and professions. (This was whispered in all seriousness). And so the Parson crept up to the door, the lantern in his hand. He knelt down before the lock and fell to examining it cautiously, finally thrusting in a bent piece of wire and getting to work. He said he could get that door open in two minutes.

Meanwhile the others were huddled together waiting anxiously. Indian was leaning against the wall, making it shake with his nervous trembling, and Texas was peering out of the window to make sure that there was no sign of danger there. And then suddenly came the thunder clap.

Nothing could be imagined more terrifying to the amateur burglars than what actually happened in the next half minute. There came first the sound of a creaking door, a sound that made them start back. And an instant later a figure sprang out into the hallway, a figure that they could plainly see in the darkness, for it was white as snow. The figure raised one arm and called in a voice that was clear and unfaltering:

"What are you doing there?"

The plebes stood aghast, trembling. They knew the voice, and that but increased their horror. For it was Grace Fuller, their dearest friend!

They all recognized her but one, and that was Texas; Texas had been leaning

out of the window and the voice was not so distinct to him. He wheeled about with the swiftness of a panther, giving vent to a cry of anger as he did so. He flung his hand around to his pocket and whipped out his revolver. Before the others could make a move to stop him he swung it up to his shoulder.

And an instant later there came a blinding flash of light and a loud report that woke the echoes of the silent building.

CHAPTER IV.

SEVEN BURGLARS IN A SCRAPE.

The scene that followed beggars description. Mark had leaped forward to seize the Texan's hand, shouting aloud:

"Stop! stop! It's Grace Fuller!"

Texas started back in surprise; at the same moment came the shot, which was from the girl's revolver. It was accidental, as she afterward declared, though the plebes did not know it then. The result frightened Grace even more than it did them the bullet buried itself in the wall, but the sound of the report was followed by a wail of agony from the terrified Indian, which echoed down the hall. And Grace heard shouts from various parts of the hotel, doors opening, people running about, and she knew that her friends were in deadly peril.

A much more hopeless situation it would be hard to imagine; the girl was horrified. But her first thought was had she wounded Indian, and she dashed wildly down the hallway to them.

One glance at the huddled group of figures sufficed to answer that question. Before she could make another sound there came a bounding step upon the stairway.

"We'll be discovered!" cried Mark. "Quick!"

He turned to the window; but a single glance outside showed him two figures running across the lawn. There was no hope of escape there. They were gone!

An instant later Grace Fuller's clear tones rang in his ear.

"Come! Come!"

Like a flash she turned and dashed down the hallway to her room. Mark followed at her heels, and the rest of

them, too, dragging the half-paralyzed and terrified Indian along, while the shouts and footsteps swelled louder and louder to urge them on.

They were just in time. Grace Fuller had scarcely time to push the last one in and then slam the door before three men, one of them her father, dashed around a turn of the hall and confronted her white figure standing at the door, the revolver still in her hand.

The huddled plebes inside were too alarmed to think. They heard the quick-witted girl call to the men:

"Here! Hurry up. This way!"

And then they heard the footsteps die away again, as the men with her at their head dashed down the hall toward the rear stairs of the building. They knew that for the time they were safe.

They stood panting and breathless, listening for a moment. They heard the noise at the rear increase; it was evident that everybody was hurrying in that direction. Mark sprang to the window and looked out. He saw three men running toward the foot of the ladder.

"There's where they went up!" he heard one of them say.

And then came a shout from the rear and the three dashed around the building in that direction, leaving the lawn clear and the place deserted. Mark turned and cried to the others:

"Come! Quick! Now's our chance!"

It was a desperate chance, but they took it.

"One dash for the camp," whispered Texas. "Git in an' hide, no matter what!"

They leaped out of the window and made a dash for the ladder. A second or two might make all the difference now. They might get a start, or again they might find a man with a revolver to stop them at the foot. It was a critical situation, and the plebes were quick as lightning, even Indian.

Texas dropped to the ground, and Dewey after him. They could not wait for the others to get down the ladder. Mark slid down like a flash, holding to the side with one hand. Indian slipped half way and tumbled the rest. Chauncey and the Parson came down one on each side, all most on top of them, and a second or two later the seven were at the

foot staring about them like so many hunted animals.

"Come on!" cried Mark, seeing no one. "For your lives!"

They sprang forward and dashed away toward the camp. They had not gone a dozen yards before there came a shout from the rear of the hotel, a shout that swelled to a roar.

"There they go! Quick! Stop 'em! Halt!"

Halt? Not much! Those plebes were running as never did man run before. Even Indian was breaking records, fear urging him to prodigies of speed. Fortunately there was no one of the pursuers who was armed, but they were in hot pursuit, and their shouts might have the camp awake any moment.

It was a very short distance to the camp, but to the burglars it seemed a league. They expected a pistol-shot any moment, and yet they could not run any faster. They bounded across the path, through the bushes and on, until suddenly a high embankment loomed up before them. It was Fort Clinton, and they dashed around the corner and into the camp beyond.

They were not so quick but that the foremost of those in chase saw clearly where they went; and the cry swelled out upon the breeze:

"The camp! The camp! The burglars are hiding in the camp! Don't let them get out!"

Fortunately the sentry of the post had been at the other end of the path. There was no danger of his recognizing them, but he saw them cross his beat and vanish among the white tents. He heard the cry of "Burglars!" and as he came dashing down the path toward the spot his shouts ran out above the others:

"Corporal of the guard! Post number three!"

Camp McPherson was in an uproar ten seconds after that. The shouting woke every cadet in the place and brought them all to their tent doors at a bound. The young corporal dashed out of the guard tent and around to the sentry's aid, the tactical officer in command right at his heels with a clank of sword. At the same moment up rushed the crowd of excited half-clad men from the hotel.

"Burglars! Burglars! They're hiding in the camp!"

The lieutenant (the tac) took in the situation in an instant. He dashed down the path, warning the sentries as he ran. The officer at the guard tent turned out the members of the guard a moment later and hurried them away to double the watch about the camp. At the same time the "long roll" was being sounded by a drum orderly up by the color line, summoning the cadets to form at once on the company street.

Truly those burglars were to have a hard time getting out of that trap, into which they had gotten so easily.

Meanwhile, what as to the Seven Devils? The time between when they entered camp and rushed into their two tents and when the company battalion formed was perhaps one minute. In that brief space the plebes had flung off their clothes and hid them feverishly under their blankets, then leaped into their uniforms and fallen into line. And that was the end of their danger.

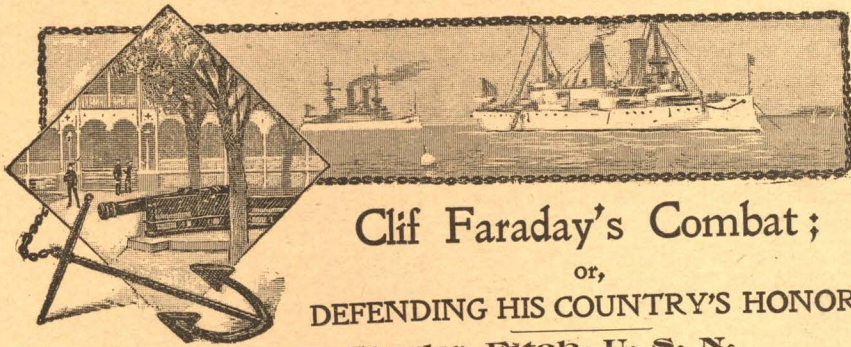
The battalion once formed there was a hasty roll call, showing all present. And then began a search of the place. The officers, and some of the men from the hotel searched every tent, every spot within the camp. And when they found no burglars they gathered together and stared at each other and wondered how that could be. The tacs interviewed the sentries, and each swore that no burglars or any one else had run across their beats. After which came another search, and another failure, and more mystery.

That those burglars had been cadets on a lark no one dreamed. For they had been desperate looking burglars, masked and armed. But where were they now?

No one knew, and no one knows to this day. The cadets returned to their tents, discussing the curious situation, and in a few minutes more the camp had settled into its customary stillness.

[THE END.]

The next West Point novelette by Lieutenant Frederick Garrison, will be entitled, "Mark Mallory's Bargain; or, The Story of the Stolen Treasure," No. 27, Army and Navy.



CHAPTER I.

AMONG THE BERMUDAS.

"Breakers ahead!"

"Starboard the helm."

"Starboard the helm, ay, ay, sir."

The first cry was from the lookout of the vessel. The second came from the pilot, and the third from the man at the wheel.

The ship was a stately wooden frigate, the U. S. Monongahela, training ship of the naval cadets. She was gliding along slowly before the wind, with just enough of her canvas set to give her steerageway. Vigilance was the word on board, for the vessel was entering the harbor of the Bermudas. The lookout's cry had been at the sight of the long white crest of the waves breaking over the outer coral reefs.

The cadets on board were grouped about the deck, or standing aloft in the trim rigging, ready to handle the sails. All of them were gazing about them with interest.

Those who had read of the famous "hundred islands," with their luxuriant vegetation, were somewhat disappointed at what they saw. The time was July, and a coating of withered and dirty green was the best the land could show. Numerous white cottages, little specks in the sunlight, gleamed in the distance, but they only served to increase the sombreness of the background.

Above, "all in a hot and copper sky," the sun beat down upon the vessel. Below, the clear green waters rippled past, showing the curious changes in tints for which the islands are famous. Flying

fish could be seen skipping away in all directions, petrels and tropic birds were hovering over the white track of the vessel. Through the water on either side the coral shallows could be distinctly seen, with their vari-colored marine growths.

All these were new sights to our friends the cadets. One group of them, in whom we are especially interested, were leaning over the railing, gazing with many surprised exclamations at the tints they saw. They were Clif Faraday and his chosen band, members of the fourth or "plebe" class.

Faraday himself was a tall handsome lad, with frank, pleasing features, and curly brown hair. On one side of him was a smaller, fair-haired chap, known as "Nanny" Gote among his friends. On Clif's other side was a dark Japanese lad, who had been blessed with the nickname of "Trolley." Besides these there were the merry Grat Wallace and the mournful Joy, who at the moment was so interested that he forgot to be mournful.

The scene upon the dock where the vessel was to land was scarcely less interesting than the water. There were helmeted red coats of the British garrison, custom house officials, and steamship agents galore. All were watching the approaching vessel with interest, and also another which was close behind in her wake.

The other vessel has not been mentioned previously because, as Trolley remarked, "She no in it—she in soup." Trolley's slang may be explained by saying that there had been an impromptu race between the Monongahela and the other ship, and that the Monongahela

had won, much to the natural joy of her youthful and ambitious sailors.

The victory was not popular among those on the other vessel, quite naturally. Neither was it popular among the watchers on shore. The vessel was her majesty's frigate *Albert*, at present in use as a training ship of the British navy. Therefore the Americans were doubly rejoiced, especially the Jap, who was more volubly patriotic than any of them. The amount of incoherent and incomprehensible slang which Trolley had made use of during the brief race just past would have "outslung" a Bowery newsboy. And when at last it had become apparent that the *Monongahela* really was drawing away from her rival, he actually had the temerity to start a cheer.

The cadets took it up with a will; fortunately for Trolley, the officer of the deck hadn't seen him begin it, or there would have been trouble.

Whether the disgruntled occupants of the *Albert* enjoyed the sound as it was borne back to them it is hard to say, though one would be apt to suppose they didn't.

"We'll have something to twit out English cousins about, if we meet 'em on shore," laughed Clif. "Please notice the fact that they've more canvas than we, too."

The honor that resulted to the victor was not altogether an empty one, as it was found when the vessel, having furled her last jib, was brought round close to the landing-place and came gradually to a stop. The public dock was not a very large one, and it was nearly crowded. There were two large merchant ships, a steam yacht, and one of the steamers of the New York line. The *Monongahela* took up the rest of the space. The Englishman anchored in the bay.

Trolley wanted to give another cheer at that, and was barely choked off in time.

Landing in the Bermudas is quite a ceremony. Hamilton is the town, and it is a very sleepy town. There is a time-honored custom—which no one dreams of violating—of building a gangplank to the ship instead of coming up close to the wharf. Nobody is supposed to be in a hurry on a tropical July day.

As has been mentioned, it was then about midday. The cadets were summoned below to dinner a few minutes later, and Hamilton, the Bermudas, and the English schoolship were lost to view for a while.

Shore leave was granted to most of the lads during the afternoon. Thus it happens that we find Clif Faraday strolling through the town a short while later.

Hamilton, the capital city, has not much in the way of beauty to attract the stranger. The shops are what most people would describe as "slow;" the streets are hot, at least in July, and except for the residence portion they are far from beautiful.

However, that has but little to do with the story. Clif was noticing it as he strolled along the wharf. A few minutes later recalling some trifling purchase he meant to make, he turned and entered one of the stores.

He was not expecting the sight which met his eyes. There were four or five figures clad in blue uniforms seated near the door. They were cadets of the English vessel, the first ones Clif had seen. He gazed at them with a look of interest as he entered, being careful, however, that his gaze should not amount to a stare that might be mistaken for rudeness.

The others were not so particular, as Clif could not help observing. They stopped their conversation abruptly and turned their heads to follow him with their eyes. A moment later as he stood facing the counter with his back to them, he distinctly heard the words:

"One of those blamed Yankee cads."

The shopman, who was speaking to Faraday, heard the remark also, and saw his customer flush a trifle. But Clif did not see fit to turn or notice the remark in any way.

"I only hope they aren't all of that kind," he mused to himself, "else I shall have to turn Jingo. But they're probably just like Sharp and Crane, and the rest of that third class gang on our own ship."

This thought made Clif all the more determined to keep his temper. The Englishmen were probably angry at the way the *Monongahela* had shown them

CHAPTER II.

"a clean pair of feet." (That was Trolley's version.)

The cadets of the Albert, however, had no idea of letting the matter rest so easily as that. One remark led on to another, and soon there was a spirited conversation being carried on in a loud tone among them, all obviously meant for Clif's ears.

"Americans are all such deuced upstarts," observed one.

"I can't abide them," added another.

"They're most of them cowards, too," chimed in a third. "They swallow all sorts of insults without daring to do anything."

"Ha! ha! yes," cried the first speaker again. "By Jove! they even build fast ships, you know, so's to practice running away from the enemy."

When Clif Faraday once made up his mind not to do a thing it was usually not easy to make him. He had determined to pay no attention to those fellows, and he didn't, though the shopkeeper watched him expectantly. Suddenly, however, an incident occurred which completely changed the situation.

There was a light step in the doorway, and the American heard a familiar voice.

"Why, Clif——"

The next moment there was a heavy fall and a frightened cry!

Clif wheeled about in surprise and stared. What he saw was as follows:

The person who had entered was his little friend Nanny. He had fallen violently forward upon his face, and Clif had turned just in time to see one of the Englishmen drawing in his foot.

The next instant Clif leaped forward, and Nanny's assailant found himself seized by the collar in a grip like steel, jerked to his feet and flung headlong across the room.

He struck the wall on the opposite side with a crash. Just above him was a huge jar, containing he knew not what. The sudden shaking brought it tumbling down, however, and a second later the cadet learned to his dismay.

He found himself completely buried beneath a cascade of pickles!

CADET CRANE'S ENGLISH COUSIN.

The scene that followed beggars description. The rest of the Englishmen had leaped to their feet and sprung forward to their companion's aid. But they were too late, and they started back in alarm as they saw the victim's plight.

The latter rose to his feet sputtering and gasping, red with fury—and green with pickles. The jar had fortunately not contained the ordinary large pickles, but the nondescript concoction known as chow-chow. It had soaked his clothing and poured down his neck.

He was rubbing it from his mouth and eyes and ears. His hair was like the seaweed locks of old Glaucus, or——

"The mermaids with their tresses green
Dancing along the Western billow."

He scarcely waited until he was able to see, before, yelling with rage he made a savage rush at his assailant. Clif put up his fists to give him a welcome, but just then a new party interfered. It was the shopkeeper, and he seized the English lad by the shoulder and forced him back.

"Steady!" said the shopkeeper. "Don't be a fool."

"Let me go!" roared the other, "let me go, I say! I'll kill him! I——"

"You won't do it here," retorted the shopkeeper, with emphasis. "You shan't treat my store as if it were a barroom. If you can't behave yourself you'd better go out on the street and do your fighting."

The lad struggled furiously to free himself from the man, but it did him no good; and presently he gave it up and fell to snarling angrily.

"I'll get even with you yet, you confounded American cad!" he growled. "You can't fight like a gentleman——"

"With you," put in Clif, mildly. "However," he added, "if you really do want any satisfaction, why run along home and wash up. Then send for me. I am on the U. S. Monongahela. You probably noticed the name this morning——on the stern."

Clif put that last phrase on by way of a mild bit of sarcasm.

"My name is Faraday," he added. "Good-day. Come along, Nanny."

That would have ended the scene, so far as Clif was concerned, for he had turned toward the door. But just then some other persons chanced to enter, and their remarks caused Clif to stop.

There were two of them, also cadets of the Monongahela. They were the two referred to by Clif as "Sharp and Crane," third classmen. They were probably the worst enemies our plebe friend had in that class. They were bullies, both of them, and hated Clif for his successful resistance to all their contemptible schemes. Crane, the elder and more virulent, had sprung forward in surprise as he entered the store.

Clif he had not noticed; it was the Englishman he was approaching.

"Why, hello, Tom!" he cried. "How are you, old man?"

The one addressed as "Tom" was the one Clif had just knocked down. He gazed at Crane and then rushed toward him.

"By Jove, cousin!" he began, "I wasn't looking for you. How—"

The American, instead of taking the hand the other held out, had started back in amazement as he gazed at his cousin's be-pickled figure.

"Why—what the dev——" he gasped; then he stopped and turned, as "Tom" pointed savagely at Clif.

"He did it!" cried he. "That cad! He caught me when I wasn't looking and knocked me down."

Crane turned and faced Clif with flushed cheeks and an angry look.

"How dare you?" he cried. "You fool, haven't you any better sense than to strike a stranger that way? I should think you'd try to behave yourself before strangers, anyhow."

To this, of course, Clif said nothing. He answered it with an easy, contemptuous smile that only angered Crane the more.

"I hope you won't mind him," he began, turning to his English friends apologetically. "He is an ignorant, vulgar fellow, you know. Nobody has anything to do with him on board ship. He's a coward; even his own class cut him."

Whereupon Clif calmly smiled once more, and then spoke.

"You're a liar," he said, very low.

Crane whirled about in a rage.

"You shall pay for this!" he cried. "I'll lick you till you can't stand up when I catch you alone."

"You can't do it," responded the other, still in the exasperatingly low tone.

"This fellow Faraday," continued Crane, "is a disgrace to the service. I hope you gentlemen won't get your ideas of Americans from him. I think you ought to give him a good lesson, Tom, wallop him till he can't stand up."

"That would be a first-rate scheme," laughed Clif. "Inasmuch as you aren't able, Crane! Get your English cousin to do it for you."

"You're afraid to fight him!" snorted Crane.

"He knows my name," said Clif, gazing at the burly English fellow without any very great apprehension. "He knows my name, and when he sends for me I am ready. When I come back I'll give you a thrashing also. And now I don't see that I am gaining very much by standing here talking with you small boys."

"You'll gain a black eye pretty soon," snarled "Tom."

"That's better than a green one," laughed the other, significantly. "What do you think of that, Pickles?"

To this latest insult "Pickles" had no chance to reply, for Clif had turned and strolled out of the store, his little friend at his side. As they turned the corner they recognized the voice of the store-keeper again.

"You loafers better get out of here now," said he. "I don't think I'm gaining much by having you hanging around."

And then Clif hurried on down the street.

Clif chanced upon his friends a few minutes later. They were walking up the street hunting disconsolately for him. There was generally little prospect of fun for them when Clif Faraday was absent. There was a joyful reunion and then Clif told the story of his quarrel with "Pickles" and Crane. There was no little indignation at the latter's conduct.

"Crane evidently thinks more of his

cousin than he does of his country," exclaimed Grat Wallace, angrily.

"I don't think it's that so much," laughed Clif. "It's that he hates me."

"Him bad goose egg," observed Trolley, sagely shaking his head. "Him need a good—er—how you say that?"

It wasn't often that Trolley got stuck in his slang. He gazed at his friends helplessly.

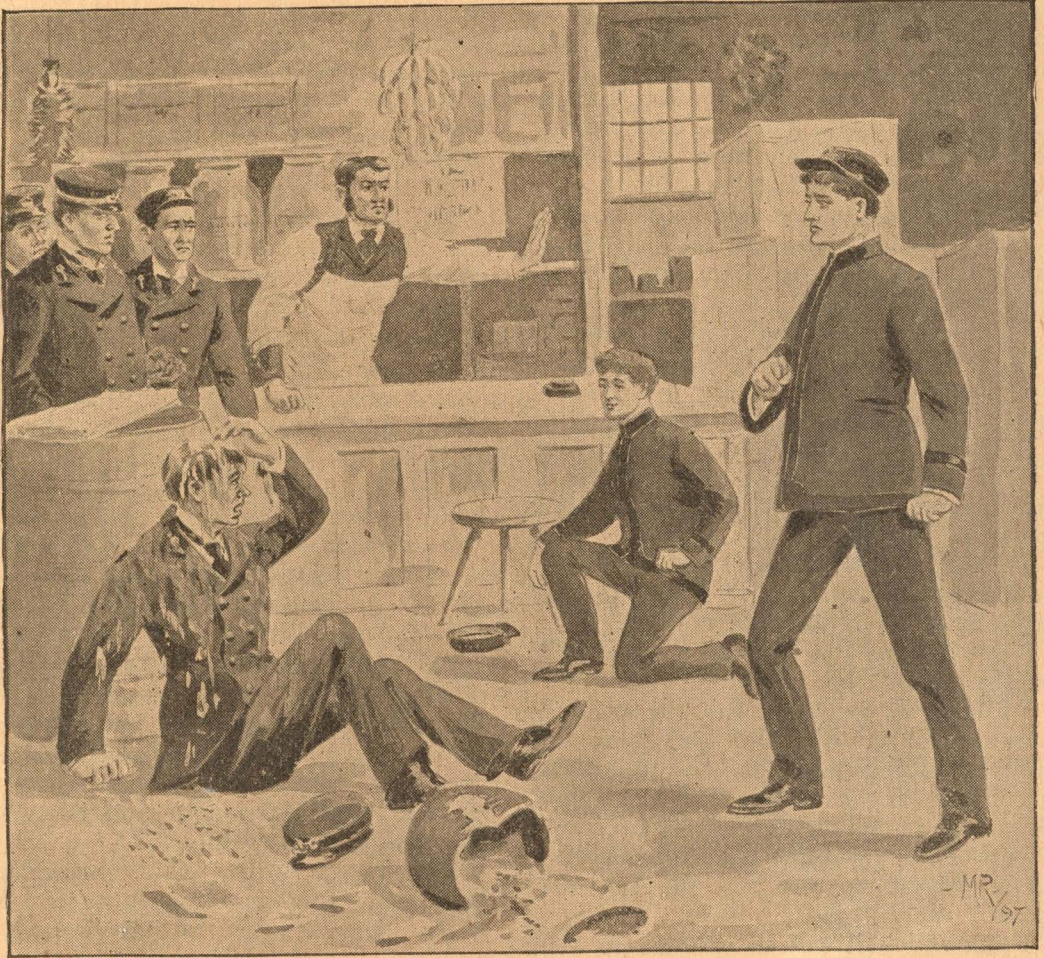
a broad grin of relief. "Him need good dressing up."

"You mean dressing down," laughed Clif. "Trolley, you're twisted."

There was a shout of laughter at that last remark. Trolley looked puzzled.

"Why you say I'm twisted?" he inquired. "I stand straight as you."

"All trolleys get twisted once in a while," answered Clif. "I'll have to ex-



A SECOND LATER THE ENGLISH CADET FOUND HIMSELF BURIED BENEATH A CASCADE OF PICKLES (page 1215).

"You mean a good licking, don't you?" inquired Clif.

"No!" said Trolley, emphatically. "No mean licking. How you say when you put clothes on people?"

"Clothes on people!"

"Yes. You say he need good—"

"Dressing?" inquired Toggles.

"Yah! Dressing!" cried the Jap, with

plain that to you some day. Meanwhile we aren't admiring the scenery."

During the talk they had strolled back toward the residence portion of the town before mentioned. About them were gardens filled with all sorts of beautiful exotic plants, for which the islands are so famous. Hugh royal palms and cocoanut palms towered above them. Juniper and

palmetto, banana trees and plantain grew wild along the roadside. The observant Jap was especially interested in the cocoanuts. Cocoanuts he imagined to be a nickname, in as much as the only thing he had ever heard referred to as a coconut was his own head. It took quite some time to straighten out his ideas on the subject, and then Trolley had added one more slang phrase to his vocabulary.

"Cocoanut!" he chuckled. "What a funny name! Some day I tell somebody I smash his cocoanut—he! he! Here come somebody now. I like to smash his cocoanut!"

This last remark of Trolley's was caused by the appearance of two figures down the street. They were none other than the two third classmen, Sharp and Crane, turning up once more. The scowls with which they favored the plebes as they passed may easily be imagined. Clif chuckled to himself.

"Crane is still mad," he observed. "However, I don't think we need to worry about him any more. We've only to lick his English cousin for him."

If Clif could have heard the conversation of the two as they went on he would perhaps not have uttered those careless remarks.

"I tell you," snarled Crane, "that he'll fight anyway, even if he is crippled beforehand. He's just fool enough."

"But how do you propose to do it?" inquired Sharp.

"I don't know yet," was the other's answer. "I haven't thought, confound him! But I'm going to fix it so that he'll either have to back down and be jeered all over the town by the fellows from the Albert or else fight and get wiped off the earth. What do you say to that, old man?"

From which it will be evident to the reader that Cadet Crane had a plot.

CHAPTER III.

A MYSTERIOUS ACCIDENT.

The plebes strolled on quite unconcernedly. They walked far back into the island, gazing with interest at the semi-tropical growths they saw. They climbed the celebrated "Gibbs Hill," from which

all the islands could be seen. They roamed down toward the seashore and gathered the bits of coral and strangely colored shells.

Toward evening they turned to retrace their steps toward the "city." They met several other groups of cadets likewise homeward bound, and the parties joined forces, a merry and noisy crowd. They woke the old town considerably with their cheers as they marched down the street toward their vessel.

Clif was with them, when suddenly he felt some one touch him on the arm. He turned and found himself facing one of the English lads from "Pickles'" crowd.

"Mr. Faraday?" said he.

Clif nodded and stepped aside.

"What is it you wish?" he asked.

"Mr. Faraday," responded the other, "Mr. Gregory, the gentleman you insulted to-day so outrageously——"

"Yes," said Clif, smiling, "leave out the details. Go on."

"He has made me his second," growled the other, surlily. "He wishes to know if you can get off from the ship to-night."

"I could," said Clif, doubtfully. "But why at night?"

"We sail in the morning," answered the other. "Either you must come to-night or be considered a coward. Mr. Gregory directs me to say that he will meet you here, on this spot, say at eleven o'clock to-night."

"Thank you," smiled Clif. "Very kind of him, I think. And where are we to go?"

"Back into the country. And you may bring two seconds with you."

"Thank you again," Clif responded.

"How many will Mr. Gregory have?"

"Mr. Gregory is a gentleman!" snapped the other. "He will take no advantage over you. May I say that you will come?"

"You may," was Clif's answer.

And then he turned and walked off to join his companions, leaving the Englishman glaring at him malignantly.

"Tom'll eat that fellow in just about five minutes!" he growled as he walked off.

The possibility of that being true did not worry Clif very much. He was smil-

ing serenely as he fell in with his friends again.

"We've fixed up the fight," said he. "Mr. Thomas Gregory is his name—'Pickles,' you know—and he's going to get his revenge to-night at eleven."

The announcement created a great deal more excitement than Clif thought it warranted. Toggles and Nanny, Grat Wallace, Joy and Trolley were all head over heels with curiosity, demanding to know where, when, how, who, what, and everything else. They all vowed they were going along to see, and there was great dismay when Clif announced that only two were allowed.

"I'll bet they have more than two," growled Toggles. "And I'll bet I wouldn't trust myself with fellows like that."

Joy fell in as a chorus to this mournful strain, which he doubled in intensity when he found he wasn't one of the lucky two selected.

"I'll take Grat and Trolley," was Clif's decision. "They're the best fighters, so if there should be any foul play attempted they may help me some."

"It's an outrage!" Joy growled. "Here I am a faithful advocate of peace. I preach peace, peace, nothing but peace all day, and when it comes to a fight I am deliberately insulted, left behind as if I didn't know a good one when I saw it. How can I show the horrors of war aright if I never see a battle? How can the temperance orator tell of the evils of drink unless he takes one before he starts?"

"He! he!" chuckled Trolley, who was delighted because he was to go. "Him funny boy! Him think he can fight——"

"I can lick you anyway!" roared Joy, in mock rage. "I'll do it right now if you——"

"I smash your cocoanut!" chuckled Trolley.

That triumphant announcement brought the dispute to an end, for the simple reason that Joy couldn't help joining in the laugh. Trolley smiled placidly; he had worked in his new slang at last, and therefore he might rest in peace.

As for Clif there was nothing for him to do but make the preparations for steal-

ing off that night. Walking across that gangplank in the moonlight without discovery bid fair to be by no means an easy task; Clif set to work to find out which of the cadets would be on guard, so as to "fix" him beforehand.

During this he did not fail to notice the two third classmen scowling at him malignantly. Clif turned to Toggles, who was with him at the time and remarked:

"Old man, I wish you'd keep your eyes on those two for me. I'm not afraid of the English fellows, but if Crane and Sharp go ashore to-night I think I'll prepare for dirty work."

That was a very shrewd surmise on Clif's part. He had good reason to suspect that Crane might try some scheme to help his cousin. But as it happened, Clif's warning was unnecessary. Crane's plot was destined to be developed on ship-board, and before the time for the fight. This was the way it happened.

The summons to turn in for the night found all of the cadets tired and sleepy. They had been roaming about the land all day and were quite ready for their hammocks. Clif hurried below at the first tap of the drum, resolved to get as much sleep as he could before the hour of the battle.

He hurried to the berth deck, where he with the rest of the cadets slept. He grasped his hammock preparatory to turning in. The next instant he snatched his hand away with a scream of pain!

The deck was in an uproar in an instant. Clif's friends rushed to his side. Scarcely able to contain himself for the agony he suffered, Clif held up his left hand. It was covered with a black substance that seemed almost to sizzle on the flesh.

The plebe's cry had brought one of the officers tumbling down the hatchway. He gave one glance at the unfortunate lad's hand and then shouted for the surgeon. The latter came rushing in breathless. He glanced at the discolored hand.

"Good Lord!" he gasped "It's acid!"

Quick as a flash he seized the plebe by the shoulder and hurried toward a pail of water.

"Wash it in there," he cried. "I'll be back."

Poor Clif was ready to faint with agony as the officer dashed away. He was back a moment later with a bottle in his hand. It contained lime water, and he dashed it over the lad's hand to neutralize the effects of the cruel acid..

It was all over then, so far as the burning was concerned; but Faraday's hand was raw half to the bone, and he could scarcely stand from weakness and pain.

Cadet Crane's hour of triumph had come!

CHAPTER IV.

CLIF FARADAY'S BATTLE.

"Ah! So you've come at last, have you?"

The speaker was he whom we have variously known as Gregory, Tom, and Pickles. He was standing beneath the shadow of one of the buildings along the water front of the town. His voice was gruff and menacing. He was addressing three lads who were hurrying toward him.

"Yes," responded Clif Faraday, for he was one of the three, "I am here."

"I was wondering if you were going to be coward enough to back out, confound you!"

Clif flushed scarlet at the unprovoked insult, but he steadied himself and answered calmly.

"I am not a coward," he said, in a low voice. "But I have come to tell you that I cannot fight you."

"Not fight me!" roared the other, his coarse features swelling with rage. "You've got to fight me. If you don't, by thunder I'll wipe the place up with you right here."

"If you will listen——" began Clif, still quietly.

"Plague take it, I don't want to listen! That's always the way with these infernal American upstarts. I knew you were a coward, and I said so. It's just as Crane said, you're all talk."

"I am trying to tell you," said Clif, swallowing his wrath and starting again. "That I have a friend who will fight for me."

"Well, why in blazes can't you fight for yourself?"

"I met with an accident," answered Faraday. "My hand is burned and——"

"Humph! A nice story. Got it done up in rags to carry out the bluff, too, I see. Well, who's the fellow that's going to fight for you?"

At this Trolley, who had been waiting in the background, came forward.

"Here," said he. "I do it."

The English bully stared rudely into his face. Then he sneered.

"Want me to fight a confounded Chinese do you? What the dickens do you take me for any——"

Thomas Greogry never finished that sentence. Trolley's hands were all right, if Clif's were not, and he let one of them drive straight at his tormentor's nose. The latter staggered back, then recovered himself and leaped forward with a yell of fury. The little Jap smiled at him calmly, though trembling in every limb with indignation.

"You fight?" he said. "I thought so! Come on!"

The English lad's two companions seized him just in time to prevent his starting a battle then and there.

"Come, Tom," whispered one of them. "Not here. We'll be found out. Come on back into the country."

Tom didn't want to do that. He struggled like a wild man to get away, and nothing but brute force kept him back. At last, however, he gave in.

"Come on," he snarled "I'll wait. But by jingo, when I do get a chance at him, I'll murder him!"

With this pleasant promise he turned and started angrily up the street. Our three plebe friends followed at a little distance.

Nothing was said on the trip, beyond a little swearing on the Englishman's part. Trolley was too mad to say anything. As for Clif, he was simply boiling over with indignation. He felt somehow that all his strength had come back to him; he felt like flinging the bandages from his helpless hand and throwing himself upon his brutal tormentor.

They passed completely through the city and out to the suburbs and the country beyond, where Clif and his friends had strolled that afternoon. They did not go very far. Gregory espied a clear space

to one side of the road in a lonely part of the country, and he turned and leaped over the fence.

"Come on!" he cried. "This is far enough. I'm getting impatient. I want to get a whack at that confounded Chinese!"

This last remark was not lost upon our Japanese friend. If there is any insult to infuriate a man of his race it is to call him by that name. But Trolley said nothing; he simply clinched his fists the tighter as he climbed the fence and joined the other three.

"Hurry up!" commanded Gregory, impatiently whipping off his coat. "Get a move on you there!"

Nothing could have suited Trolley better. He flung his own jacket to the ground, clinched his teeth, and without waiting for a word or a signal, made a leap at his hated foe.

There was a lively time after that. The fight was not very equal. Trolley was strong and active, but he was nothing compared with the powerful Englishman. The latter was tall and heavily built. Clif, as he looked, could see through his shirt sleeves the muscles moving in his great arms. Gregory was evidently a fellow who could strike a blow to fell an ox.

All this the Jap did not stop to notice when he made his savage rush. His opponent was ready for him, and in fact sprang forward with no less eagerness. The pace was so swift from the start that the rest could scarcely follow it.

A fight like that could not last long. Both the fighters were strong; both were putting all their strength into every blow, having no object on earth but to paralyze the other. Trolley, quicker than the Englishman, was dancing about and lunging in at him. The Englishman was smashing blow after blow with all the power of his frame.

"Just one of them'll land," groaned Clif, "and then it's all up with—there it is!"

Clif's last exclamation came as he leaped forward. The Jap had caught one of his opponent's crushing drives upon the side of the head, and down he went, as motionless as a log.

Such was the other's rage that he

leaped at his fallen foe with an oath, and it was with difficulty that his seconds dragged him back. Clif raised his helpless friend upon his knee. Poor Trolley was done for a fact. He was gasping for breath; that was the only sign of life that was in him, for his eyes were shut and his body limp.

Gregory was raging still, striding back and forth and glaring at him.

"Want any more, you confounded heathen?" he cried. "Get up, if you do! By thunder, I wish you were one of those blamed American cowards!"

Clif paid no attention to this. He had drawn a damp sponge from under his coat and was bathing his companion's face. At last a convulsive shiver passed over Trolley's form and he opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he gasped; and then, catching sight of the bully's face, he struggled to his knees.

Clif forced him down again.

"No, no, Trolley," said he. "Lie still, old man. I'll 'tend to this now."

The Jap sank back and closed his pallid eyelids again. Clif rose to his feet and painfully began to remove his jacket.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Gregory," said he, "I'll try my skill now."

"Gotten tired of the bluff, have you, hey?" sneered the bully.

Grat Wallace had leaped to his friend's side as he saw his purpose.

"No, no, Clif!" he cried. "You can't; you're not able. Let me do it. You——"

Clif paid not the least attention to the protest except to put Grat gently aside. Clif's eyes were fixed upon the Englishman. There was a peculiar smile about Clif's mouth which, if the Englishman had known him better, he would have recognized as a danger signal. Grat Wallace saw it, and he ventured nothing more, but stepped to one side.

Clif took off his jacket slowly, keeping his piercing gaze fixed on his rival meantime. The latter gazed at him and his bandaged hand with a contemptuous sneer on his face.

"A pretty scheme, that was!" he commented. "Better take the rags off, now you're through with the bluff."

"He may have brass knuckles under them," suggested one of the Englishman's seconds, suspiciously.

By way of answer, Clif slowly undid the bandages and removed them. Then he held up his hand with the livid palm toward the three. Even Gregory, the brutal bully, started as he saw the frightful festering burn.

"Good Heavens!" he gasped, quite involuntarily.

Clif silently replaced the bandages, slowly tied them into place, and then looked up.

"I am ready now," he said, simply.

Whatever momentary pity might have been in the English cadet's mind disappeared at that cool defiance. All his wrath at the plebe's former insult surged up again, and, clinching his fists, he made a leap at Faraday. He meant to finish that fight in no time.

He aimed one of his savage, crushing blows at his rival's head. Clif leaped lightly to one side and dodged the stroke.

"So that's your scheme!" roared Gregory, furiously. "Going to run, hey? Think you can make a fool of me that way. Confound you, we'll see!"

Faraday's tactics had become evident in a moment. He was going to "fight shy." He had only one hand to strike with; the best he could do was to ward off blows with his other arm. So he meant to trust to the lightness of his feet. Gregory shut his jaws with a snap as he uttered those words "we'll see."

It was a desperate game the crippled plebe was playing. The slightest slip of the foot, the least false move, and he would be at the mercy of his merciless opponent. And even granting that he kept him off, how was Clif ever to end the battle with only one hand? It was no wonder that the Englishman sneered as he rushed into that contest.

Clif, however, was not as helpless as everybody thought. Naturally quick and active, he was springing here and there, ducking and dodging, devoting all his energies to getting away not even offering to strike a blow. He was in perfect training, too, but for the day's weakness. He soon had his heavy and rather unwieldy opponent completely breathless from exhaustion.

It all happened so quickly that Gregory had not even suspected any danger. His seconds had not even thought it necessary to warn him against tiring himself; for how could that fool of a plebe dare hope to win in the condition he was? The Englishman chased him furiously, driving him all about the clearing, aiming blow after blow that struck only the empty air. And then at last he stopped and stood still; his chest was heaving, his arms were half dropped—

Like a flash Clif sprang in. He gave only one blow, but he put all his hope in that, and all his muscle. His fist shot out with the speed of a cannon ball, and landed full upon his opponent's chin.

Gregory's head shot back as if it would snap off. He seemed to take a flying leap backward through the air. He landed with a thud on the ground and there he lay in a motionless heap.

Clif Faraday never saw him move again. For he stopped just long enough to be sure that his work was done, and then he turned and picked up his jacket.

"That was a lucky blow," he observed to Grat. "It was the last, too, for I broke my thumb. Come on."

And a half minute later the three plebes were on their way back to the Monongahela. Cadet Crane's English cousin was then just coming to.

The following morning when her majesty's training ship *Albert* passed out on her way to sea a group of plebes on the *Monongahela's* forecastle broke into a cheer.

At the same moment a small American flag flashed in each hand. Trolley, dancing up and down, waved his over his head and cried enthusiastically:

"Hurrah for Clif! Him bully American. Him defend his country's honor against all odds! Hurrah!"

(THE END.)

The next Naval Academy novelette will be entitled, "Clif Faraday's Gallantry; or, Balking a Conspiracy," by Ensign Clarke Fitch, U. S. N. Army and Navy No. 27.

JIM CROW; HIS STORY.

BY D. H. PARRY.

The boys on the ranch were divided into three parts: two-thirds of them took to him from the moment he came loping over the bluff on his wiry black broncho; the other third didn't quite know what to make of the youngster, and were not going to "give themselves away" to a fellow who sprang from nowhere and didn't appear to be going anywhere else.

It was a soft, golden evening when he came, and the boys were loitering round the ranch-house, smoking.

He sat in his saddle as cool as a cucumber and looked from one to another until he had singled out Nat Hickory.

"Are you short-handed, boss?" he said, in a high, childish treble.

Nat continued to roll the tobacco he was cutting in his brown hands, and we knew he had taken in the stranger from top to heel.

"What can you do, young 'un?" he said.

"Round-up and herd, shoot any living thing at sight, an' ride any plug you've got on the range," replied the youngster, quietly.

"This is a modest article, boys," said Nat, grimly. "This is a specimen of human nater which it is refreshing to observe; perhaps our young friend will give us a show?"

And before he could proceed any further with his chaff the boy turned his pony and did give us a show that brought a cheer from every throat. He rode the broncho at fully gallop over the plain in front of the ranch-house; stopped him dead, and came back like a whirlwind; springing out of the saddle, he ran along, vaulting in and out several times, and

hanging, Indian-fashion, from the pommel; then he sat face-to-tail, and, after a round or two like that, turned about, and snatched Nat's sombrero from the ground amid a ringing shout.

"Thunder, boy, but you'll do!" cried Nat, warmly; but the lad laughed, and pulled out a dollar-bit, unslinging a revolver from its case.

"If one of you'll lay a clod on top o' that hitching post, and another dollar on top o' the clod, I'll bet you this'n to that'n I'll bring it off twice out of three times," he said, throwing his coin into Nat's sombrero and handing it back to him.

The boys were all on their feet by that time, and a dollar was quickly forthcoming and in position.

The youngster rode past the post for a few yards, and, wheeling round, came back toward us at an easy gallop. We thought he'd some fresh arrangement to make, for he never looked at the mark; but half a dozen lengths this side of it, he lay back and fired behind him.

There was a cloud of dust from the broken clod, the coin lay unharmed on the top of the post, and the ponies in the corral whinnied at the yell we gave. Twice more he did it, and pocketed the dollar as if nothing had happened; and then, I can tell you, we looked at him all over, after we'd clawed and thumped him to show our good feelings.

It was a strange face; the eyes, bright and piercing, were laughing eyes, and a curly mass of hair clustered round his forehead; but the lower half of his visage, from the nose downward, was set

and hard, and never smiled all the time we knew him.

When the firm mouth opened, it was either to give some necessary reply or to let fall a dry saying which set the boys in a roar. I can tell you, Jim Crow was a character, and we never properly understood him until—well, until afterward!

About a month before he turned up, another man had tramped to the ranch and been taken on; a man we nicknamed Jingo for some reason or other; and somehow it got among us that Jingo and Jim Crow were connected, although I never could see that the notion had any basis of fact, for Jingo was a sullen, rather unpleasant fellow, hailing from Western Kansas, against whom many of Jim Crow's quiet jokes were levelled. Not a word could we get out of the youngster, except that he had neither kith nor kin living, that he came into the world somewhere up North—which might mean anywhere—seventeen years previously; and that as for his riding and his tricks, well, he'd just learned them anyhow, and hadn't been inside a circus in his life, as Jingo had spitefully suggested.

Jim Crow and I were riding side by side about a week after his arrival.

The ranch lay ten miles behind us, and a little ahead two thousand beefsteers, fifteen cowboys, a wagon with a white canvas tilt, and a string of led ponies were moving slowly across the plain, raising a cloud of dust, through which we could just make out their forms.

We had as many miles to travel as there were steers in the herd, and I had calculated on a five months' trip of it, if there were no mishaps.

Jim Crow waxed strangely communicative, for him, as we went, now over a sand-patch, now through the flowering grass; again looking sharply after the dog-holes, to avoid "swapping ends," as

we put it; and somehow his talk made me think.

"Been on this job before, boss?" he asked, carelessly.

"Yes; I was through to Nebraska last year," I said.

"Get 'em along all right—any stampede?"

"No; we lost five head swimming a creek."

"Snakes! you were lucky," he said. "No horse-sneaks?"

"Nary one."

"Hope we're as good this journey," he muttered, riding a little closer.

"Why, what's up?" I asked.

"He's up," replied Jim Crow, jerking his head toward one of the boys who came abreast of us, and then spurring off after a steer which had broken away.

I looked at the other and saw that it was Jingo; and, it might have been fancy, but Jingo seemed to look a little anxiously at me.

I didn't take much notice of it at the time; but afterward I saw things differently.

For the rest of that day, and, in fact, all the next day as well, Jingo followed Jim Crow like a shadow, and he had every opportunity for doing so, as their watches lay together.

It grew so marked that I became suspicious. Cowboys are queer fellows, and one bad one may play havoc with you if he is so minded. Although Jim Crow could not write, I knew he was able to spell out, so I scribbled on a scrap of paper, during a halt, "Lose your 'bacca when you come off after the first watch to-night and stroll over to me for some more. I want to speak to you." And I managed to give it to him without Jingo seeing us.

We had the herd well in hand and did fifteen miles that day, which was good going, as we were crossing a plain intersected by several mountain spurs, form-

ing deep ravines, awkward to travel with such a charge.

It was a warm, night, clear but intensely dark. I could just make out the outline of the wagon tilt, and that was all. The song of the two herders, circling round the herd, was all the sound I could distinguish on the prairie; there wasn't

I looked at the time by the glow of my pipe, and found there was half an hour to pass before Jim Crow and Jingo were relieved, and as I placed the watch back in my pocket a strange drowsiness came over me, and I dropped right off to sleep.

There mingled with my dreams a sense of shouting, and a roar like muffled



OVER HE CAME WITH A WHOOP, CLEARING THE WHITE HORSE (page 1226).

even the bark of a coyote, and the boys were asleep by the fire after their well-earned feed.

No. I am wrong when I say that was the only sound. There was a good deal of fidgeting from the ponies, tethered in a circle, with a guard over them. I remembered it—when it was too late.

thunder, succeeded by a blank, from which I was roused by Mexican Joe shaking me, and crying, "Boss!" with a face of death.

The morning was stealing across the prairie; the mountain spurs were glowing in the sunrise, and the gray dew

hung on the grass stems and sparkled where the sun caught it.

There were the ashes of the fire, and the wagon under which I had slept; there also were the boys lying in a ring round the charred embers; but not a steer was in sight, not a pony stood at its tether.

The horse-thieves had cleared the whole outfit, and stampeded the cattle, and, what was more, Jingo and Jim Crow were gone as well!

My head throbbed, and I looked at Mexican Joe. He had fainted.

A strange tremor was in my limbs, and a vile taste raged at the back of my tongue. Dazed as I was, I at once realized that something had been put in our coffee at supper, and that we were all poisoned! I crawled from one to another, and shook my companions, but a grunt or a heavy sigh was all I could get out of them, and when I went to the man who had mounted guard over the ponies, I turned sick with the horror of it. He had been stabbed to the heart!

Up to the brow of a knoll I scrambled, and searched the plain eagerly.

To the south not a moving speck on the horizon; to the east and north nothing but the bluffs and mountain spurs; but out westward, a half-mile off, there was a white patch, that made my heart thump when I saw it, and I went for that patch as the proverbial drowning man clutches at the straw.

It was the last broncho of the outfit, a weedy old plug, I knew well, with the temper of a mule, but I secured him after some trouble and rode back to the boys.

Mexican Joe was on his feet, and I left him to bring the others round, while I made what I felt was a vain quest among the valleys and hollows.

The trail of the herd led off up a ravine toward the highlands; a week's work might get them together again if, as I supposed, they had run for the pools at

the foot of Mount Despair; but, without horses, there was nothing to be done, though there was just a chance that the "rustlers" had lost two or three in the dark. Anyhow, I felt more like hunting around "on spec" than facing the thirty odd miles for home with the bad news.

I could not get that Jim Crow out of my thoughts, there wasn't a doubt but that he and Jingo had worked the thing between them, and it would have gone hard with either of them if we'd met.

For three hours I hunted, and saw nothing; I got all the life there was out of that old white screw, and then he gave it up and I couldn't move him.

I dismounted in a hollow and let him rest—sorry that I hadn't gone back to turn out the boys on the ranch—and, while I stood fuming and distressed beyond all belief, a voice broke the silence, and Jim Crow appeared on the bank above me so suddenly that I could only stare like a man in a dream!

Over he came with a whoop, clearing the white plug, and landing beside me in the sand; and I had him out of the saddle on his back before he could speak.

"Now, you young——" I stopped, with my whip raised, for the boy's eyes were full of tears that rushed down his cheeks, and the most appealing look of reproach I ever saw on any face came into his as he looked up at me.

"I'm sorry you thought that of me, boss," he said, getting onto his legs slowly; "I've come a heap o' distance to tell you, an' you'll find Jingo 'bout a mile t'other side o' yon dip with my bullet through him. I tracked the ponies; they're all in a cavern on the mountain, an' there's two troops of the Seventh goin' up there now, so there'll be a fight!"

I looked at the boy in astonishment.

"The nearest troops are at Fort Ramsey," I said.

"I went there," he replied quietly.

"See here, boss, I came to your ranch with a purpose; I've had it for five year now, since Rube Green's lot burnt us out up home and killed mother and father. Father said to me when he was dyin'— 'Jim, boy, it's Rube Green's done this; you've got to be equal with him.' And I reckon I'm 'bout so, for it was Rube Green's lot lifted our ponies last night, an' we're goin' to smoke 'em out, boss."

He was into the saddle and away like a streak, and when I recovered my self-possession, I followed him toward the hills as fast as the old horse would take me.

The gorge was an ugly sight, with the black rocks and the dead men lying around under the sunset.

The gang had shown fight, and there had been blood spilt freely on both sides.

The first thing I saw when I reached the spot was Jim Crow's broncho, shot through the head, and, higher up, a group of blue-coated United States cavalrymen, bending round something in a blanket.

He saw me coming, and in a moment I was kneeling beside him, with his hand in mine.

"Sorry you thought that, boss, but I know appearances was ag'in' me," he said, and the smile had got into the

lower part of the boy's face somehow. "I daren't let on until the last minute," he whispered, "and then it was too late."

A captain bent down and muttered in my ear:

"Never saw such pluck; plugged five with his own hand; and when they shot his pony he just went mad and charged up the rocks like a buffalo; can't live an hour—two balls through his spine—poor little chap!"

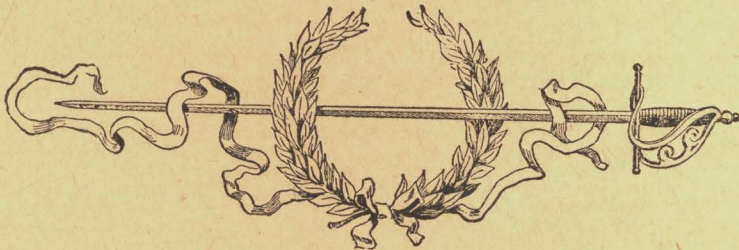
I looked into the boy's eyes until my own filled, and it was all misty.

I had a kind of frantic feeling, a futile desire to do something, to save him, to atone for my suspicion; but my heart sank, and the doctor, who was kneeling on the other side of him, rose with a quick glance at me, and went to tend elsewhere.

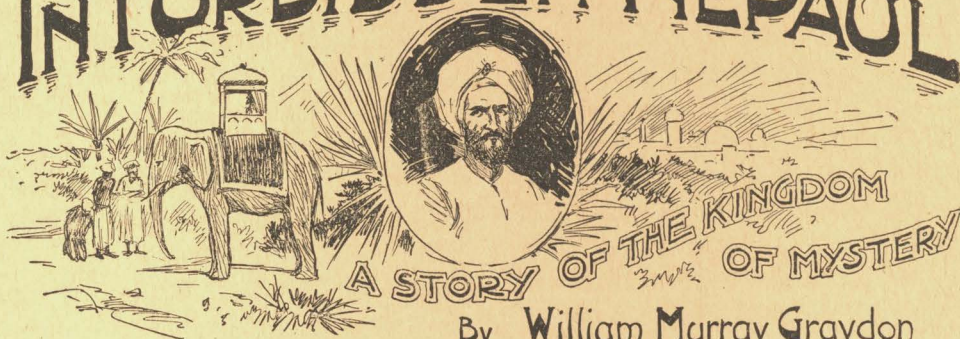
"It's all right, boss," said Jim Crow, still smiling in a happy, weak way, "I ain't sufferin', an' I ain't got no folks to grieve, an' the mare's killed, so there's nothing to stay for. I'd sooner go out now. You'll find the ponies here, an' the cattle was grazin' by the ponds three hours ago, 'cos I seen 'em."

There was a short pause. I thought he was going to speak again, but he sighed instead, and his hand fell from mine and lay palm upward on the grass.

The boy's wish was granted him, and Jim Crow had "gone out."



IN FORBIDDEN NEPAUL



By William Murray Graydon

Author of "A Legacy of Peril," etc., etc.

("IN FORBIDDEN NEPAUL" was commenced in No. 15. Back numbers can be obtained from all newsdealers.)

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE MISSING KEY.

THE Englishmen had been spared the evil of separation. They were together in one cell—a cold and dreary place with massive walls, scantily furnished, and dimly lit by a grating high overhead. The ponderous iron door was not opened after it had once closed upon them. Food and drink were passed through a wicket by a morose and silent priest, whose lips no entreaties or questioning could force, and his was the only face that the prisoners saw.

They had realized almost from the first that their situation was hopeless. Escape was impossible. They looked for no help from Bhagwan Das, thinking it only too probable that he was already dead or a doomed captive like themselves. That they were doomed they never doubted, and the constant mental strain began to tell on their nerves. Day by day, night after night, they expected at any hour the dread summons to execution. Of what had happened since their seizure they knew nothing, but the thought of what might be Muriel Brabazon's fate often caused them to forget their own miseries and goaded them to a state of madness. Nigel made no secret of his love for the girl, and whenever he spoke of it Hawksmoor listened in moody silence and with a strange look in his eyes.

One night the Englishmen were sleeping soundly on the dungeon floor. For Nigel, at least, it was no dreamless slumber. He was living the past over again, and visions sweet and bitter coursed through his brain. So when he suddenly sat up with a start, he was uncertain at first if he was awake, or if a real hand had just tugged at his arm.

"But doubt fled when he saw Hawksmoor sitting erect beside him, and caught his low-muttered 'Hist!' Next he heard the rattle of a key, a snapping noise, and then the big door creaked slowly inward on its hinges. Two men appeared—two dim figures in turbans and white tunics.

"Sahibs!" came a low but distinct voice.

A cold perspiration broke out on Nigel's forehead.

"God help us!" he whispered. "They have come to lead us to death!"

"Sahibs, are ye here?"

Again the voice, and this time its articulation was familiar. The truth flashed suddenly upon the Englishmen. They sprang to their feet, tremblingly crept nearer and recognized the foremost figure as Bhagwan Das. And the revulsion was so great—the change from black despair to glorious hope so swift—that for an instant they stood speechless, overcome by emotion and gratitude. They could have fallen upon the Hindoo's neck and embraced him.

"Be prudent, sahibs," warned Bhagwan Das. "There is need of silence if I would save you, and I have come for that purpose."

"Thank God!" whispered Hawksmoor; and Nigel fervently echoed the words.

"Here is one whom ye may not welcome," Bhagwan Das continued. His cell I opened first, thinking ye might be there."

He indicated his companion as he spoke.

"Ali Mirza!" exclaimed Hawksmoor, after a keen glance.

The wizened little Hindoo threw himself at the feet of the Englishmen.

"Have mercy, sahibs!" he pleaded, in a low voice.

"Rise, Ali Mirza," Hawksmoor interrupted. "I forgive all. We are now comrades in misfortune, with but the one aim, to escape. And how is that to be done, Bhagwan Das?" he added. "Tell us quickly what there is to know. We had lost hope of help from you, and indeed we thought you dead."

In brief words Bhagwan Das related the events of the past two weeks, the strange meeting that night with his sister Rana, and how she had successfully stolen and brought to him the bunch of keys from Vashtu's room.

"With these," he went on, displaying them, as he spoke, "our escape should truly be a simple thing, for at night no watch is kept at any part of the monastery. Yet without the keys I could not have moved a finger to help you, for between the three sections of the monastery there are locked doors. This is the abode of the priests of the second degree, and the keys brought me hither from my rightful place among those of the third degree. A single locked door bars us from the courts and passages of the first degree, and there we shall be able to reach the subterranean river and take boat, or flee through the tunnel."

"Good! I understand clearly," said Hawksmoor. "The tunnel will be a surer thing, for how can we pass the water-gates in a boat? But what of the mem sahib? If she is in the monastery still she must go with us!"

"I'll share no escape without Muriel!" Nigel exclaimed, anxiously. "Speak, Bhagwan Das! Be quick!"

"Sahibs, the girl is no longer here," the Hindoo answered, hesitatingly. "But yesterday she was taken to the Durbar House in Yoga, where the Prime Minister may have easier access to her with persuasive words."

"Then she has not consented to the marriage yet?" gasped Nigel.

"No; she holds out bravely."

"And there is a chance of saving her if we succeed in escaping?"

"Why not, Davenant Sahib?" was the evasive reply. "The Durbar House of Yoga is no such prison as the monastery."

Nigel turned to Hawksmoor.

"You hear?" he exclaimed, eagerly.

Hawksmoor nodded.

"We'll have a try at rescuing Miss Brabazon, be assured of that," he said. "But the first thing is to save ourselves. Are none of the priests about at night,

Bhagwan Das? And are we sure of as much time as we need—enough to give us a start after we are once safe away?"

"The priests are sleeping," the Hindoo replied, "and there is no reason why our escape should be discovered before daylight. Vashtu may not miss the keys even then, and as for the man who kept guard outside of your cells—well, he will give us no trouble, sahibs. I crept upon him unawares, and throttled him until he was dead. And then I placed him against the wall in such a position that when morning comes he will appear to be alive and awake."

"That was a clever trick," said Hawksmoor, "and it adds to our chances."

"We had better be moving, don't you think?" broke in Nigel. "By-the-by, what did the priests intend to do with us?"

"This would have been your last night on earth, sahibs," Bhagwan Das answered, grimly, "and also the last for Ali Mirza. The three of ye were to have been put to death at midday to-morrow, and in a way that would turn your blood cold were I to declare it."

"We don't want to hear it," muttered Nigel—"not now, anyhow."

"No; wait until we are sure of our lives," added Hawksmoor. "Come, let us be off."

With that they slipped noiselessly out to the corridor, and there was a moment's delay while Bhagwan Das closed and locked the door of the cell, the better to divert suspicion from the escape. Then, gliding in single file by the body of the dead guard, the four passed up some stone steps, and came to the level proper of the monastery.

From here they pushed on rapidly, hearing no sound but the patter of their own light footsteps. From one passage to another they came to the great and magnificent room where Vashtu had received Hawksmoor and Nigel, and this Bhagwan Das said was the main chamber of the priesthood of the second degree.

Leaving it at the further end, they threaded the same long corridor leading to the court on which the Englishmen had emerged after their journey in the boat. But now, just at the end of the passage, a door that they had not seen before barred the way to the court. Bhagwan Das inserted a key in the lock, tried it, and drew it out. So he went through the bunch, one by one, while his companions watched him with growing anxiety. And at last he turned about and faced them in the dim light.

"Sahibs, I have not the right key," he whispered, hoarsely. "It is a great misfortune, for now are we cut off from the third part of the monastery—from the subterranean river and the tunnel. Brahma help us!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE GOLCONDA OF THE PRIESTS.

The Hindoo's words produced great consternation, and in the dim light the party looked at one another anxiously. Were their hopes of escape, but a moment before so bright, now destined to be shattered? Were they still helpless prisoners in the monastery?

"You are certain the right key is not there?" whispered Hawksmoor.

"I am certain," was the reply. "I have tried them all, sahib, and perhaps even others are missing from the bunch; though why it should be so I know not."

"And both the subterranean river and the tunnel through the mountain are impossible of access?"

"Quite so, sahib."

"Then what chances are left to us, if any?" Hawksmoor asked.

Bhagwan Das hesitated briefly.

"There is just one," he answered, in a low voice. "It is the way by which I escaped from the monastery forty years ago, when I was believed to be dead."

"And how was that?"

"It is too long a tale for your ears now," the Hindoo replied: "but this much ye may know. The plan is full of peril and doubt—doubt because a certain key may be missing from the bunch."

"We are ready to face the peril," broke in Nigel. "It can't be worse than to be found here in the morning, which means death. Lead on, Bhagwan Das."

"Yes, go ahead," added Hawksmoor. "We'll stand by you, whatever comes."

Ali Mirza spoke in the same strain, and without further urging Bhagwan Das put up his bunch of keys,

and led his companions quickly back along the route they had so lately traversed. After pressing on for a time, with silence and solitude around them, they unlocked a heavy door, passed through, and locked it again behind them.

They were now in the extreme and most sacred part of the monastery, the home of those priests who had after long years of service attained the honors of the third degree. Bhagwan Das led on with increased caution, urgently warning his companions to make no noise. They turned frequently, threaded a maze of passages, and came finally to a great room that was much finer than the one they had seen before, especially in its carvings and columns. A dim light from overhead shone on walls studded with rubies and diamonds, on a floor paved with blocks of gold and ivory.

"What place is this?" asked Nigel.

"And where do these fabulous treasures come from?" added Hawksmoor. "The monastery must be a veritable Golconda!"

"We are in the council chamber of the third degree," Bhagwan Das whispered, in reply. "As for the riches of gold and jewels, that secret ye will shortly learn for yourselves."

He would say no more, but strode on swiftly through a wide corridor that led out of the council chamber. And now a strange sound, the location of which it was impossible to judge, began to be heard faintly—a confused murmur of chanting voices.

"What is that?" Nigel asked in alarm.

"I thought all the priests were asleep," said Hawksmoor.

"Do not linger, sahibs," Bhagwan Das replied hurriedly and evasively. "What ye hear means no ill. It comes from the apartments of the priests, far off to the left, where always certain rites are performed between the hours of midnight and dawn."

It was too dark for his companions to notice the old Hindoo's agitation; so they took him at his word, and all the more readily because they soon passed out of earshot of the weird sounds. Yet not a step further would the Englishmen have advanced had they known what the chanting meant—how for their own welfare their trusted leader was deceiving them and keeping back the truth.

A few moments more of gliding through the mystic shadowy silence, between walls magnificently carved by hands that had been dust for centuries, and then the four paused before a massive golden gate. No key was needed to open it, only a touch in a secret place. And that spot, known to the priests of the third degree, was known also to Bhagwan Das. At his magic touch the gate opened, and when all had passed quickly through it closed as softly and mysteriously.

For an instant Hawksmoor and Nigel stood as though petrified, lost in rapture, with words of awe and astonishment on their lips. Ali Mirza, too, was deeply stirred as his nature would permit. It was indeed a wonderful sight! The fugitives had passed out of the monastery at its furthest end—out into the fresh air and the glory of a brilliant night, under a silver moon that soared high in a starry sky.

Behind them, above the golden gate, the lofty roof of the monastery stretched between the lofty ramparts that enclosed the valley, touching them on both sides. In front the mountain walls curved inwards to right and left, forming a circular court that must have been at least a hundred feet in diameter. Across this the precipitous mountains almost met again, and between them the continuation of the valley, narrowed to but a few feet, vanished in a forbidding-looking black slit.

The court, flooded with moonlight, presented a dazzling picture. It was paved with gold, and along the sides a row of columns, cut in relief out of the solid rock, were rolled with sheets of the same precious metal. In the very middle, facing the gate of the monastery and erected on a broad pedestal of ivory and red marble, stood a golden and life-size statue of Durgadeva, the Serpent Queen.

"It is like fairyland!" exclaimed Nigel. "Where are we, Bhagwan Das?"

"We have left the monastery," the Hindoo replied, "and this is the ancient Court of the Ruby Crown. We are still on the artificial floor that was built over the valley, but it ends yonder."

He pointed across the court to the black slit between the mountain walls.

The four approached the statue and mounted the pedestal. As the Englishmen had judged, the image of

Durgadeva was of pure gold, worth a king's ransom. The two arms stretched straight out, and the ample breasts were studded with golden spikes, six inches long, and sharpened to a fine point. The seven branching serpent-heads were encrusted with rubies and diamonds, and a golden crown poised on the middle head had set in it a single ruby as large as a man's two fists. The gem was of a pigeon-blood color, and sparkled with indescribable glory.

"By Jove, what a prize!" gasped Hawksmoor, pointing to the stone. "Can't we take it with us?"

"Evil will befall if we do," Bhagwan Das said, sternly. "That ruby crown is centuries old, and here every chosen ruler of Nepal comes to have it placed on his head by the high priest."

"Heaven grant that Matadeen Mir be not the next to undergo the ceremony!" muttered Nigel. "But for what purpose are the golden spikes, Bhagwan Das?"

"For those who have incurred the vengeance of Durgadeva," the old Hindoo replied, with a shudder. "Seek not to learn the secrets of the Serpent Queen, sahibs."

Meanwhile, over on the right side of the court, Hawksmoor had made a discovery which had escaped his attention before. He went curiously to the spot, and the others followed him. Here there was a break in the surrounding rampart—instead of a towering wall of rock, a parapet ten feet high, with arched openings cut through it. Forty feet below, a narrow and sluggish stream of water vanished beneath the floor of the court, and in the distance it was seen winding at a sharp angle, a ribbon of moonlit silver, between sheer cliffs that seemed to tower to the sky.

"Ha, another gorge branching off from this one!" muttered Hawksmoor. "And below us must be the subterranean river that flows under the monastery into the Lake of Dacca."

"It is even so, sahibs," declared Bhagwan Das; and there was a strange thrill in his voice. "Forty years ago, as I was led out to die in this court, I broke from my guards and leapt through one of the arches of the parapet. The priests thought me drowned at the time, and when recently it came to their ears that I was alive in Lower India they believed that I had escaped by way of the lake. But it was not so. I first swam under the monastery and gained a shelf, where I lay until nightfall. Then, knowing that the water-gate to the lake would be watched and guarded, I chose the only course open to me, and one that offered scarcely a ray of hope.

"I fought my way up this river, sahibs, partly by swimming and partly by hauling myself from rock to rock. Then, half a mile above here, I came to where the stream, flowing from the boundaries of far Thibet, split into two forks. Down the other fork I journeyed, clinging to a log which by Brahma's aid I found. Safely I passed through the raging rapids, the Pool of Death, and hours later was washed out on the lower slopes of the Himalayas, beyond the frontiers of Nepal."

"It was a wonderful escape," said Hawksmoor. "But what is the Pool of Death?"

"It is an evil place," was the evasive reply, "and it lies yonder"—pointing to the narrow continuation of the valley at the far end of the court. "The distance from here to there is the short side of a triangle—the two forks of the river make the two other sides."

"And is that the way we must escape?" asked Nigel.

"Yes, if I have the key to the gate," the Hindoo assented. "The Pool of Death was the punishment intended for me—the punishment reserved for priests who are traitors to their order—and yet, as you know, it is possible for men to pass through it and live."

"I would like to know something more about it," said Hawksmoor. "I don't fancy going blindly—"

"Have patience, sahib," interrupted Bhagwan Das. "Come, we have lingered here too long. The night is far spent, and at daybreak the monastery will be astir. Let us be off while the time is ours!"

With that the four struck across the court, the Englishmen casting envious eyes at the ruby crown as they passed, and dived into the ravine between the sheer and towering mountain walls. Now they were on natural earth, in a dark and dismal passage no more than a dozen feet wide. What little reflection of the moon penetrated the gorge showed that the walls were of a yellowish color. Here and there on both sides were heaps of ruddy earth, rude tools, and lateral shafts,

clearly cut by hand, that gleamed in many hues as they wound deep in the heart of the mountains.

When the Court of the Ruby Crown was a quarter of a mile behind, Hawksmoor's eye was suddenly taken by the bluish soil at his feet, and by the dully-glittering pebbles that were either imbedded in it or lying loose in profusion, washed to the surface by the rains of the wet season.

"Good heaven!" he gasped, surmising the truth. "Is this where the priests get their treasure?"

"The sahib is right," Bhagwan Das replied. "We are standing in the midst of riches that could buy the world. This is the mine of the priests of Durgadeva. In some of the side-cuttings the walls are of pure gold, and in others they are studded with rubies and various gems. Yellow gold is to right and left of us, ready to be cut out in chunks. And under foot we are treading diamonds as though they were but worthless dirt!"

Diamonds under foot! A Golconda on all sides! Is it any wonder that Hawksmoor and Nigel yielded to a sort of madness? Forgetting all but the fabulous wealth within reach, they began to snatch the largest of the uncut stones from the blue earth, and to stuff them into the folds of their kummerbunds and turbans. Ali Mirza caught the contagion, and with greedy little cries he imitated his companions.

Nor did Bhagwan Das entirely hold aloof. A score of the best diamonds he chose and secreted, and then he stood erect and laughed mockingly.

"Fools—fools that we are!" he cried. "To be thinking of riches when the Pool of Death awaits us! As yet we know not whether life or death is to be our portion. Come quickly, sahibs!"

"You are right," said Hawksmoor. "It was a passing madness. Lead on—we are ready to go."

"We will keep what we have got, anyhow," muttered Nigel. "It would be folly to throw them away."

They hurried forward through the dismal gorge, crunching diamonds into the earth with every step, and about fifty yards further on they came to a halt before a great gate of stone, twenty feet high. Beyond it the mountain walls seemed to spread out right and left. There was a sound of swirling waters, and a fragrance in the air like the far-borne breath of dewy forests.

"This is the gateway to the Pool of Death," Bhagwan Das said, solemnly; and the bunch of keys clanked in his hand as he fitted one to the lock.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A MOMENT OF MADNESS.

The first key was useless—the second—the third. With nervous fingers the old Hindoo persisted, but still in vain. The Englishmen fumed and looked worried; Ali Mirza swore strange oaths under his breath. Now the last key! Ah, that, too, lacked power to move the intricately-contrived lock—the right one was indeed missing! With a gesture of despair, Bhagwan Das threw up his arms and moaned aloud.

Then, for a moment the four were silent, stunned by the great calamity which had fallen upon them. Ali Mirza's limbs trembled, and his wizened face was the color of ashes. The Englishmen, loth to believe the worst, studied the possibilities of the gate; but it was smooth and sheer, as were the walls to right and left of it, and crowned by a top piece that projected a foot or more. To attempt to climb over it would be folly.

"So this is our last card, and it has failed!" muttered Nigel. "It's hard to die like rats in a trap, and with Muriel far away in Yoga!"

"And only this block of stone to bar us from freedom!" exclaimed Hawksmoor, with a savage glance at the gate. "I'm not ready to give up yet, Davenant. There must be some loophole of escape left—some overlooked chance that we can take advantage of! What do you say, Bhagwan Das? Search that fertile brain of yours a little deeper."

"By Brahma, sahibs, we are lost!" replied the Hindoo. "What is there for us to do, save wait for death as it comes? With the morning the priests will search for us, and surely find us, whether we remain here or creep back to the monastery. As you know, locked doors bar us from the tunnel and from the subterranean river."

"Can't we reach the gardens?" asked Hawksmoor.

"That also is impossible, sahib."

"And the side cuttings that we passed by—where do they lead to?" questioned Nigel.

Bhagwan Das shrugged his shoulders.

"They are shafts dug for taking out gold and jewels," he replied, "and would only serve to hide us for a little time. Yet it comes to my mind," he added, quickly, and in an altered voice, "that one desperate chance is left us."

"What is it?" the Englishmen demanded, eagerly and simultaneously.

"You know it, sahibs—the way by which I escaped forty years ago. But the drop from the parapet is far, and for half a mile we must swim against the current, or cling to rocks, until we reach the fork of the rivers. And then we may find no logs on which to trust ourselves to the stream—"

"Enough; we're more than willing to take the risks!" interrupted Hawksmoor. "Some of us, at least, will pull through."

"All of us, I hope," said Nigel. "Why not, if we are good swimmers?"

"It is better to drown," added Ali Mirza, "than to wait like sheep for the death the priests will give us."

"Sahibs, we will try it," declared Bhagwan Das, "and may Brahma lend us aid!" He glanced up at the narrow streak of starlit sky visible between the crests of the mountains. "Alas, that we should have wasted so much time here!" he continued. "The breaking of the dawn is very near, and if that overtakes us— But come quickly! Hasten! hasten!"

At once they turned their backs on the gate, and rapidly retraced their steps through the windings of the gorge. Silently and anxiously they hurried on, and when they reached the verge of the Court of the Ruby Crown a look of terror started suddenly to Bhagwan Das' face. For what they had feared was coming to pass! Already the sky was luminous with the dawn, and its white light was struggling for mastery with the silver beams of the fading moon.

"There is still time," exclaimed Hawksmoor. "See, the monastery gate is closed, and from the silence those within are surely sleeping!"

"But it is the appointed hour—the day is breaking!" Bhagwan Das gasped, hoarsely. "Brahma help us, sahibs! The gate may open this instant, and if any see us drop we are lost. Quick!"

"What do you mean by the appointed hour?" demanded Nigel.

The old Hindoo was too agitated to reply. His limbs trembled as he led the way across the court. They passed the image of the Serpent Queen, and were close to the parapet.

But just then the peaceful quiet of the early morning was stabbed by a noise close at hand—the chanting of weird voices, a tinkling of bells, and a clang of silver gongs. And at this Bhagwan Das seemed to have a spasm of terror.

"They are coming! they are coming!" he moaned. "It is too late to drop into the river; they will hear she splash. We must hide, sahibs. Yonder is the only shelter."

As he spoke he turned a little to the left of the parapet and dived in among the pillars that had been cut out of the rock wall. There was a narrow space back of them, as yet in shadow, and each pillar rested on a broad and high pediment. Hawksmoor and Ali Mirza crouched behind one of the pediments, and Bhagwan Das and Nigel behind another. The old Hindoo was trembling with agitation.

"Forgive me, Davenant Sahib," he pleaded, in a shrill whisper; "I pray you forgive me. If I lied it was for your own good."

"If you lied!" exclaimed Nigel. "What do you mean? What is to be forgiven?"

"Hush, they are coming!" muttered Bhagwan Das. "Look, look, sahib!"

The strange tumult had increased, and Nigel forgot all else as he peeped cautiously out from one side of the sheltering pillar. Suddenly the dawn brightened with a swift stride, the eastern sky glowed above the mountain-tops, and at the same instant the great golden gate of the monastery swung open.

Then a procession came forth, advancing with state— pomp and ceremony into the Court of the Ruby Crown. First a score of priests of the sacred third degree, glittering with jewels, attired in long purple robes with white kummerbunds and turbans, and all chanting in deep voices. Next the high priest, Vashtu, dressed in spotless white; and by his side, pale of face,

but looking exquisitely beautiful in her rich Nepalese garments, walked Muriel Brabazon. Behind these two, clad like native dandies, and with their jewel-crested scimitars clanking, came Matadeen Mir and Dost Khan. Last of all appeared ten more priests, ringing silver bells and lightly striking silver cymbals together.

The procession moved on to the image of Durgadeva, where the priests grouped themselves in a half-circle, with Vashtu, Matadeen Mir, Dost Khan and the girl in the space thus enclosed. The music of the bells and cymbals died away, and the chanters dropped their voices lower. And then only did Nigel avert his burning eyes from Muriel's sad and lovely face, and turn in a storm of passion and bewilderment to the quaking Hindoo who crouched beside him.

"You scoundrel. I am tempted to choke the life out of you!" he hissed through his clinched teeth. "Dog—liar! You told us the girl was in Yoga! What does this mean?"

"Hush, or we are all lost!" replied Bhagwan Das. "I lied to save you. If the sahib reflects, he will blame me not for the deceit. The mem sahib was all last night with the priests, and to hope to rescue her would have been madness indeed. Yet well I knew, if I told the truth, that you and Hawksmoor sahib would refuse to save yourselves. And then you would surely have died to-day."

"I spoke in haste," Nigel muttered, bitterly. "I blame you only for seeking to make us do a cowardly thing. You were right, Bhagwan Das—we would not have gone without the girl. God help her now! What is about to take place? What means that cursed mummery? My God, has she consented to the marriage?"

"It is even so, sahibs," replied Bhagwan Das; for Hawksmoor had crept a little closer to listen. "Yes, it is true. The girl consented, and now she is about to become the wife of the Prime Minister. After that the ruby crown will be placed on the head of Matadeen Mir, and he will be the priest-chosen ruler of Nepal. And Pershad Singh is ready with his army, as soon as he hears the word to depose the present Maharajah, and—"

"By what devilish arts was this thing done?" interrupted Nigel. "How was the girl persuaded to consent? She has been deceived by some trick, I'll swear!"

"Ay, it was evil work," assented Bhagwan Das. "They told the girl that her father was a prisoner in the monastery as well as yourselves, and that all three should have their freedom on the day when she married Matadeen Mir. If she refused, they were to be put to death. So, after a time, the mem sahib yielded."

The tale of treachery maddened Nigel. The thought of Muriel—his Muriel—wedded to Matadeen Mir, was keenest agony. In the flash of a second he made an insane resolve, never stopping to consider his duty to his companions, the consequence to himself, or the hopelessness of aiding the girl herself. Yet to save her was the mad and fiery impulse that guided him.

He sprang to his feet at the moment when the chanting voices suddenly ceased. Shaking off the Hindoo's detaining hand, turning a deaf ear to Hawksmoor's frantic appeal, he darted out from the shadow of the pillar. He was seen at once, but not until he had broken through the knot of priests and snatched Muriel in his arms was he seized and overpowered; and even then they could not force the girl from him.

A scene of wildest confusion followed. Matadeen Mir, crazed with passion, would have run his sword through the Englishman's body; but the priests interfered to protect Nigel and the girl, who was clinging to him with hysterical sobs. A rush was made toward the pillars, headed by Dost Khan, and at the same instant there was a clamor from the open gate, and breathless men appeared to announce the just-discovered escape of the prisoners.

Hawksmoor and Bhagwan Das submitted without struggling to their captors, and were brought forward, looking reproachfully at Nigel. But Ali Mirza gave his foes the slip, darted to the parapet, and hurled himself headlong to the river. A group of swarthy heads peered down at him through the arches, Dost Khan's jeweled pistol cracked shrilly, and then a burst of triumphant yells told that the little Hindoo had met his death.

Attention now centred on the prisoners, and the priests noisily surged around them, demanding death for the Feringhees who had trodden the sacred Court,

of the Ruby Crown. Muriel was still in Nigel's arms and Matadeen Mir, quivering with rage, watched the two bloodshot eyes, yet not daring to touch them. For the moment none were in peril of life, save perhaps Bhagwan Das, so fearful was the wrath of his fellow priests. They hotly denounced him as a traitor, pointing to the bunch of keys that dangled from his kummbund. That he was other than Panta Lal, the priest of the third degree, none suspected.

At last, by stretching forth his lean arms, Vashtu stilled the tumult.

"Feringhee, release the maiden!" he thundered, fixing his hard and glittering eyes on Nigel.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE EMBRACE OF DURGADIVA.

The high priest's words were unintelligible to Muriel, but she knew what he meant. Her low sobbing ceased; she drew herself gently from Nigel's arms, and looked about her with courage and spirit, as though she saw some hope in the changed situation.

"I pray you have these dogs removed, and well guarded," Matadeen Mir said in the native tongue to Vashtu, "Time presses—the day has begun; and there is much to do."

Then he approached Muriel, and with a little cry of terror she shrank away from him, and took refuge beside Nigel.

"Remember thy promise, woman!" Matadeen Mir cried, fiercely.

"Wait!" Muriel said, scornfully. She turned to Nigel and put a hand on his shoulder. "Tell me," she went on quickly, "is it true that my father was a prisoner in the monastery, and that he and you and Mr. Hawksmoor were to have been set free as soon as I became the wife of the Prime Minister?"

Matadeen Mir would have prevented the answer by force, but the priests restrained him.

"You were deceived by lies, Muriel," Nigel said, hoarsely. "Your father was never a prisoner—he is safe at the Residency. And the priests had no idea of sparing Hawksmoor and myself; they intended to murder us to-day!"

"You hear?" cried Muriel, confronting Matadeen Mir with angry eyes and flushed cheeks. "And so you would have deceived me! By lies you wrung that promise from me! I hate you and I will never marry you! Take back the promise; I will die before I keep it!"

There was a loud murmur of voices, and then a sudden silence fell. It was evident, from his changing expression while the girl spoke, that Vashtu had some knowledge of the English tongue. Now, in low tones, he began to consult with some of the priests. Matadeen Mir's face was a picture of rage; he fumbled speechlessly with his sword while he watched the high priest. The sun had risen, and a shaft of golden light streamed over the mountain top and down into the Court of the Ruby Crown, hovering half-reluctantly about the hideous and baleful image of Durgadeva.

Nigel shivered as he met the mutely-reproachful glance of Hawksmoor and Bhagwan Das. He realized his madness now. He repented of the disaster he had brought upon his companions, and for Muriel's sake he would have gladly died then and there to undo the consequence of his folly. He clasped the girl about the waist and drew her to him, and she did not resist. She looked up at him, and what he saw in her eyes made his heart throb wildly.

"I must have been mad," Nigel said, hoarsely. "Why did I interfere? It would have been far better had the truth been kept from you—far better if we had met our fate to-day without seeing you! We could not escape from the monastery, though we succeeded in breaking out of our cell. And now, by my rash folly—"

"Hush!" Muriel whispered. "It is all for the best; my life would have been very short. I only promised to marry Matadeen Mir because I believed him, and thought that I could save my father—and you, who so bravely risked your life for my sake. But afterward I would have killed myself, and I care not what happens now."

"You are too young to die," said Nigel, with sharp agony in his voice. "My darling, God knows that I would willingly be torn limb from limb to save your life—to keep you from the clutches of that heartless scoundrel!"

As he spoke, a sudden stir, a murmur of voices, turned his mind into another channel. It was clear that Vashtu had reached some important decision and was about to make it known. But before he could do so Matadeen Mir brushed by Nigel and the girl and stood before the high priest.

"This is the appointed day," he said, loudly. "Behold the sun mounting higher! And yet, O Vashtu, you waste the moments in delay. I pray you make haste and have the marriage ceremony over."

"How is that possible?" the high priest asked, coldly. "The maiden has discovered the deceit—it was a trick to which I gave but reluctant consent, you remember—and she retracts the promise. And well you know that without her full consent she may not become your wife."

"That consent she will never give now—you have heard her!"

"Then there will be no marriage ceremony!" declared Vashtu.

"But the waiting soldiers of Pershad Singh?" Matadeen Mir cried in alarm. "The deposing of the Maharajah? It is too late to turn thy hand back!"

"Nay, it is not too late," said the high priest. "For the present Nepal will be ruled as it has been ruled in the past. The ruby crown is not yet for thee, O Matadeen Mir! As for the two Feringhees, and the traitor Panta Lal, who would have aided them to escape—they shall die ere the sun goes down."

Matadeen Mir fell back, his features working with rage and bitter disappointment. At one fell stroke he saw his hopes and ambitions crumble to ashes! Vashtu had spoken in the native tongue, and for that Nigel felt grateful as he clasped Muriel closer to his side. Hawksmoor was calm and composed, but the words of doom had broken the courage of Bhagwan Das, and his face was ghastly with fear. Ali might well have envied the quick death of Ali Mirza!

There was a hum of conversation for a moment, and then the voice of the high priest rang out sharply.

"Remove the prisoners!" he commanded. "They shall live until the sun has reached the zenith. But what to do with the maiden I know not, and concerning her I am greatly troubled in mind. It is a strange thing, O Matadeen Mir, that this prophecy of the ancient priest Ashtama, dug up from the Durbar House of Yoga, should have failed in the part relating to thee and the daughter of the white conquerors! Ay, truly a strange thing!"

Did Vashtu have suspicions? Was there a hidden menace in his words? It was impossible to tell what was in Matadeen Mir's mind, but certainly the sullen anger in his eyes gave way to a gloom of anxiety and fear. He darted a furtive glance at Dost Khan, on whose face also was a deadly terror.

Travers Hawksmoor saw those fatal signs, detected the swift exchange of guilty glances, and like a flash there came to him one of those inspirations which so often had stood him in good stead in the past. None were holding him, and, in three strides he stood before Dost Khan, whom he judged to be an easier subject than the Prime Minister. Looking him hard in the eyes, he made strange passes with both hands, up and down, to and fro.

At first Dost Khan seemed to struggle mentally, but his will-power soon vanished before the hypnotic influence of the Englishman. A distant look grew in his eyes, his features became vacant and stolid. Now he was completely under control, and as yet there had been no interference on the part of the priests or Vashtu.

"I want the truth from your lips," Hawksmoor said, in a clear voice, and, in Hindostani. "Are you ready to speak?"

"I am ready," Dost Khan replied, dully.

"Then tell me who forged the prophecy of Ashtama that was found in the Durbar House of Yoga—whose cunning hands cut the lying words on the slab of stone?"

"My hands did it; I am guilty," Dost Khan answered, with drops of perspiration breaking out on his forehead.

"And at whose command?"

"By the command of his Highness Matadeen Mir," the wretch replied, distinctly.

There was a sudden commotion, and Matadeen Mir staggered forward, his sword drawn ready for murder.

"It is false—false!" he cried, shrilly, striving to get through the throng at Hawksmoor. "The dog lies!"

But his guilt was plain to see—it was written on every line of his distorted features, on his trembling lip, in his madly-rolling eyes; and eager hands seized the detected plotter, Prime Minister though he was, and disarmed him and held him fast. There was furious clamor for a moment, and then Vashtu, having restored partial silence, signified that Hawksmoor should be allowed to have his way.

A solemn hush fell, and it was not broken during the thrilling scene that followed the high priest's command. At Hawksmoor's bidding and keen questioning the hypnotized Dost Khan revealed in plain and convincing tones all there was to know—how, being in early youth a skillful engraver on stone, Matadeen Mir had made him a sharer of his wicked designs, and induced him to execute the forgery; how he had done the work at Katmandu and contrived to hide the tablet in the Durbar House of Yoga; and how also he was to have been rewarded when the Prime Minister was the ruler of Nepaul.

Matadeen Mir, held by relentless hands, looked and listened with silent lips, his face turned to the hue of ashes. The unhappy wretch had lost hope, and the awful terror and agony in his eyes—brought there by the certain knowledge of his fate—was almost enough to have excited the pity of his enemies. Nigel interpreted all that was being said to Muriel, and it gave him a pang to see that she took a hopeful view of the effect the disclosures would have on the fate of the prisoners a—hope that he felt in his own heart to be baseless. It was folly, he knew, to think that the priests would ever give back to the world the Feringhees who had learned the secrets of the monastery.

At last, well satisfied with his work, Hawksmoor reversed the hypnotic passes and released his victim from the spell. Dost Khan woke up, and the stupid look vanished from his countenance, leaving it for an instant pale and terrified. Then, seeing Matadeen Mir a prisoner, he trembled in every limb and fell with a loud cry to his knees. It was evident that he knew or suspected what he had done—that he was aware of the fate awaiting him.

It was clear that punishment for both would be sure and speedy. Like his accomplice, Dost Khan was brutally seized and dragged to his feet—indeed for a moment he and the Prime Minister were in danger of being torn to pieces, so violent was the wrath of the priests. Their frenzied yells rang loud and far on the morning air, and like ravening beasts they swarmed around the two cowering wretches. But when Vashtu stretched out his arms imperiously, and his thunderous voice was heard, the clamor faded away like the dying of a tempest.

A command had been given, and eagerly it was obeyed. A passage was cleared to the statue of Durgadeva, and thither Matadeen Mir was dragged by the four brawny priests who had hold of him, struggling hard, but in vain. One awful shriek after another burst from his lips, and his face was ghastly and distorted beyond recognition. Bhagwan Das was in a state of collapse, but Muriel and the Englishmen watched the horrid scene. They knew that the punishment was just—that their own wrongs were about to be amply avenged. And yet they felt only pity for the doomed man. Had it been possible, they would have saved him from the fate that it was now easy to guess at.

Quickly the priests reached the pedestal and mounted it. They hauled their frantic victim along by inches, then lifted him almost from his feet, and by a deft and combined movement launched him forward so that he struck violently and in an upright position against the golden image. Instantly they let go of him, and sprang back.

What happened next was so swift that the eye could scarcely follow it. The heavy outstretched arms of the idol flew together with a crunching noise. One frightful scream Matadeen Mir gave, and it was choked on his lips as the metal arms squeezed him with mighty force to the breast of Durgadeva—impaled his flesh and bones on the bristling array of sharp-pointed spikes. His body quivered briefly and was still; streams of red blood trickled down to the feet of the image and flowed over the pedestal. Thus the wicked Prime Minister, a victim of his ambition, atoned for the forged prophecy.

The sight was too much for Muriel, and with a pitiful cry she swooned in Nigel's arms. Hawksmoor's face was very white, and at his feet Bhagwan Das

grovelled and whined with fear. For a moment the voices of the priests rose in a chorus of shrill exultation, and Dost Khan seized the opportunity to break loose from those who held him.

The tumult changed to an angry clamor as the poor wretch sped across the court, hotly and instantly pursued; but Dost Khan was still several yards in the lead when he reached and darted between one of the arches of the parapet. On the outer brink he paused, drew a knife from his kummerbund, and plunged it into his breast. With a moaning cry he toppled into space, and a splash was heard as his bleeding body struck the river below.

The priests fell back sullenly, angered that their second victim should have cheated the arms of Durgadeva and met with a more merciful fate. They vented their disappointment in savage cries and imprecations, until the high priest commanded and gained silence. Then Vashtu approached and stood before the prisoners; his eyes looked coldly on Hawksmoor and Bhagwan Das, on Nigel and the girl, who was still mercifully unconscious.

"You must die, Feringhees," he said, "for it is the law that none may live who have trodden forbidden Nepaul! Ay, even the maiden must die; and thou, too, Panta Lal, the traitor. And the hour of fate is at hand!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CONCLUSION.

The high priest paused for an instant thoughtfully, and the Englishmen looked at him with a creeping horror in their eyes and a strange, cold feeling at their hearts. Were they also to die like Matadeen Mir—to be crushed and broken one by one on the spiked breast of the idol? It seemed only too likely.

"It is because of the Prime Minister's wickedness, of the prophecy forged by him and Dost Khan," resumed Vashtu, "that ye are here and that ye must die. Yet the fault was less yours than theirs, and so I will show what mercy is possible. And thou, Panta Lal, will share the same fate. I would have it otherwise, traitor, were it not for the law forbidding those branded by the seven heads to die by the embrace of Durgadeva. Thine will be the punishment which thy brother, Bhungi Lal, strangely escaped forty years ago. Hope not to be so fortunate."

That it was Bhungi Lal who cowered before him Vashtu had no suspicion, nor was there now any farther likelihood of his discovering the secret. Having spoken, he turned to the priests.

"Bring hither the key," he commanded "and let the four be taken and thrust down into the Pool of Death!"

There was a murmur of ferocious approval, and Hawksmoor and Nigel darted furtive and meaning glances at each other. With difficulty they concealed their intense relief—the sudden-born hope that was in their hearts. The Pool of Death! The very place they had tried to reach, and which with all its unknown perils offered a chance of escape! Bhagwan Das, too understood and plucked up courage. His satisfaction was so evident that his companions feared it would excite suspicion.

But a deep pity marred Nigel's joy when he looked at Muriel lying insensible and quivering in his arms. It was bitterly hard that she must face dangers and hardships which even strong men might fail to surmount.

"Spare the maiden, O Vashtu," he pleaded, "for she has broken none of thy laws, and was brought here unwillingly. Slay us if you will, but send her back to her father—to the house from which she was foully taken by Matadeen Mir."

"The girl must die for the crime of others," Vashtu replied, firmly. "She may not go back to the land of the Feringhees having seen and learned the sacred things of our order."

It was useless to say more, and by this time the key had been brought from within the monastery. A moment later a little procession started across the Court of the Ruby Crown, past the crucified corpse of Matadeen Mir, and thence from the radiant sunlight into the gloomy depths of the gorge. Vashtu walked ahead, followed by two priests and the four doomed captives, Nigel bearing Muriel in his arms. Six more priests brought up the rear, chanting in solemn tones.

The short journey to the gate was soon over, and with the key Vashtu caused the great mass of stone to swing lightly open on invisible hinges. The prisoners were pushed forward a few paces, and at their feet they saw a surface of smooth and slippery rock that sloped down steeply for a dozen yards to a narrow ledge; and the ledge was on the brink of the Pool of Death.

"Go, Feringhees!" Vashtu commanded—"go, lest the gate in closing push you off."

Bhagwan Das obeyed with alacrity, sliding swiftly and safely down the incline. Hawksmoor followed, and the two caught Nigel as he came next with the girl in his arms. For a moment, while they looked eagerly and apprehensively about them, the Englishmen forgot the group of priests and the open gate above.

The ledge on which they stood, six feet wide, and curving some distance in both directions, commanded a complete view of the Pool of Death. It was circular in shape, about three hundred feet across, and hemmed in by sheer cliffs that towered half a mile in air. It was a dark, dismal and oppressive place. The water, of a blackish-green hue, swirled sluggishly about the rocky shores. Far overhead a patch of blue sky was stamped against the rim of peaks. The river entered from a narrow gorge at the right hand end of the pool, and seemed to pass out the opposite end by an arched and cavernous hole that was hardly two feet above the surface of the water.

All these details Hawksmoor and Nigel noted at a brief glance, and then they heard a creaking sound above and behind them. Clear and ominous, full of terrifying significance, rang the voice of the high priest:

"It will be better for thee and the maiden to drown Feringhees—more merciful than to fill the maw of the great serpent!"

Then the gate went suddenly shut, and there was silence. The mighty barrier of stone, as it crashed sullenly into place between the mountain walls, separated the monastery from the Pool of Death—the fanatical priests from the doomed victims.

And the Englishmen felt their blood run cold as they realized what their fate was likely to be. They could not mistake the meaning of Vashtu's farewell words! They were prisoners still—prisoners on this narrow ledge, from which there was no means of escape! And in the greenish depths of the pool, its pampered taste craving human flesh, lurked one or more such gigantic serpents as inhabited the purple lake of Dacca! At any instant the dragon-like head and hideous coils might appear!

"You heard?" Nigel demanded hoarsely of Bhagwan Das. "Is it true? Is there a serpent?"

"Sahibs, there surely is one," replied the Hindoo, who was quaking with terror—"a huge and ravenous creature that has dwelt here for three generations, grown fat on the human victims of the priests."

"But how did you escape it?" asked Hawksmoor. "You passed through here on a log forty years ago?"

"Yes; and, by Brahma's mercy, I was saved. But as I drifted into the dark hole yonder out of the pool, I heard the reptile hissing and splashing with rage."

"Forty years ago," muttered Nigel. "There was only the one serpent, you say?"

"Yes, but one."

"Then it may have left the pool long ago."

"It was the creature's home—it never left it, sahib."

"But it may be dead now?"

Bhagwan Das shook his head.

"These serpents live to a great age—more than a hundred years," he declared.

"Then why did you tell us we might escape from this place?" Hawksmoor cried, savagely.

"It was true—there is a chance," replied the Hindoo. He pointed to the cavernous hole at the end of the pool. "The river flows out at that spot, sahibs, and it is a short swim through to another pool which no human eyes save mine have looked upon. There lies an island, full of driftwood for making a raft. And the stream will bear us on and on, through darkness and light, amid perils of wave and rock, until after many hours we see the sun on the furthest slopes of the Himalayas."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Nigel. "Then there is hope for us—"

"If we hasten," interrupted Bhagwan Das. "Quick,

sahibs! let us leave the pool before hunger or the scetn of us brings the serpent up from the bottom."

Not an instant was lost. They hurried to the left along the ledge, the Hindoo leading, and as they drew near to where it would be necessary to take to the water—an ordeal horrifying to think of—they lit upon a discovery that filled their hearts with joy and gratitude.

In a long, deep fissure—a sort of a crack gaping at the base of the cliff—lay the dismembered skeleton of what had clearly been a great serpent. It was all there from the tapering tail and the ribs like cask-hoops to the monstrous head and jaws bristling with teeth and tusks. The whitened bones were in sinuous curves, not stretched out straight, but at a fair estimate the reptile must have been forty feet long. It had been dead many years, but whether it had perished from some disease or wound or of old age, those who looked with wonder at the remains could only surmise.

"Sahibs, it is the serpent of the pool!" declared Bhagwan Das. "On my head, it can be none other!"

"Thank God!" exclaimed Nigel. "And now for the second pool and the raft!"

What further things happened to the fugitives that day, though not lacking certain excitement and peril, may be dealt with briefly. There being a remote possibility that another serpent inhabited the pool, no time was lost in leaving that gruesome locality. But before taking to the water Muriel was roused from her swoon, and was acquainted with all that had happened while she was unconscious. The good news and the hope of escape brought tears of joy to her eyes, nor did she shrink from what hardships might yet have to be faced. She was a good swimmer, she said, and her attire was suited to that purpose.

It was a short distance from the end of the ledge to the outlet of the river. With a last backward look at the Pool of Death the four were swept into the arched, cavernous hole. The current bore them on through chilling darkness for a minute or two, and then brought them safely to the second pool of which the Hindoo had spoken. It was much larger, hemmed in like the other by sheer walls of rock, and with an outlet through a narrow gorge at the further end. In the middle was an island, covered with drift, light and heavy, that had accumulated through centuries of floods.

Here, not much exhausted by their swim, the fugitives landed. The men set to work at once, choosing the most suitable logs, dragging them to a shallow eddy at the lower end of the island, and binding them tightly together with thick and pliable vines. In less than an hour they had a strong raft made, twelve feet long, and a little more than half as wide. Without delay they embarked, trusting themselves hopefully to the bosom of the river.

Bhagwan Das had partly prepared his companions for what was to come, and they found that he had not exaggerated the weirdness and dangers of the voyage. The stream was for the most part subterranean—flowing deep down in the bowels of the mountains—and for hour after hour, in pitchy darkness the raft sped swiftly on its course, through a channel that seemed to be fairly wide and high; now plunging and tossing down some long and fearfully rapid drop of water, to the thunder of waves breaking over submerged rocks; now gliding gently on a tide that scarcely murmured as it lapped the unseen shores. At brief and infrequent intervals a dim light shone down from a patch of sky framed between lofty cliffs. Often the raft struck jutting rocks, or grated over submerged ones; often it was deluged with foam and spray; but the logs held stoutly, and no harm came to the voyagers.

It had been still early in the morning when the start was made from the second pool, and toward the close of the afternoon, as nearly as could be judged, the raft was yet in the subterranean river, gliding smoothly and sluggishly on a murmuring current. Muriel was at the stern, resting against a thick log that had been placed so as to form a shelter for her. The men were at the extreme front end, Hawksmoor and Nigel trying vainly to gather, from Bhagwan Das' misty recollections, how much longer the voyage was likely to last. It was a serious question, for all were suffering the pangs of hunger, not having tasted food since the day before.

Finally, leaving his companions in earnest conversation, Nigel slipped back to where Muriel was sitting, and dropped down by her side. It was the first time

that the two could feel themselves, in a sense alone and free to talk. The low tones of Hawksmoor and Bhagwan Das, mingled with the gurgling flow of the river, sounded quite at a distance.

"I hope another hour or two will see us at our journey's end," Nigel began. "You are hungry and cold, I know. I wish I could have spared you this suffering."

"Suffering?" Muriel interrupted. "Do you call hunger and cold suffering after what we have escaped? Ah, what a debt I owe you!"

With a sudden movement she nestled closer to him, and he felt the contact of her body, caught the perfume of her breath and hair, Nigel turned hot; his hand clasped hers, and it trembled in his grasp. Then, in the darkness of the cavern, he threw his arms about her slim form, and drew her tightly to his breast.

"I love you!" he whispered, passionately. "I love you, Muriel, my darling! I think I must have loved you from the first—when we met in dear old Kent—but I did not know my own heart until that night at the Residency. And now I cannot live without you!"

The girl was silent, but Nigel could feel the quick throbbing of her heart—the tumultuous heaving of her bosom.

"Have you no word for me?" he pleaded. "Can you give me no love in return for mine?"

Muriel lifted her arms and clasped them about his neck.

"I am too happy for speech," she whispered; and a tear fell on his cheek. "I do love you, Nigel. You are my hero—my king. Ten times over you have risked a terrible death for my sake. I love you more than words can tell."

"You are sure it is not gratitude, my darling?" he asked, half fiercely.

"It is love, Nigel—such a love as a woman can only know once. And yet you doubt my—"

What further she would have said he smothered on her lips with hot and silent kisses, and a happiness and content that was too great for words filled their souls. The moments passed, and they forgot the uncertainty of their fate—the doubt and peril that still hovered about them.

Then, of a sudden, there was a shout from Bhagwan Das, echoed loudly by Hawksmoor. A bend of the channel had revealed a distant patch of light—white and sparkling. With a cry Nigel sprang to his feet, lifting Muriel with him, and they eagerly hurried forward. Larger and larger grew the patch of light, and steadily nearer drifted the raft.

A minute or two more, and all crouched low, as an arched opening, jagged with rocks, dropped down as though it would crush them. And when they looked up, the blackness of the subterranean river was behind them, and the raft had floated out on a little lake set among green hills.

Yes, they were saved at last! In the rear the giant spurs of the Himalayas towered one upon another, and in front, where the waters of the lake poured over its rocky rim to dash with the thunderous noise down through the lower mountain slopes, the view was sublime indeed—a panorama of distant plain and forest, of tiny village and sparkling stream, stretching far under the golden rays of the setting sun to the mighty Terai, and thence to the purple haze that hid Lower India and the valley of the Ganges.

Of its own accord the raft swung along the left shore, finally grounding on a spit of sandy beach. With hearts filled with fervent gratitude the voyagers stepped once more on firm earth, scarcely able to believe that they had passed the frontier of Nepaul, and that the terrible monastery of Durgadeva was miles and miles behind the towering Himalayas. But there was a look in Hawksmoor's eyes that none saw or understood—a look brought there by the new and happy light that shone on the faces of Nigel and Muriel.

A few more lines, and the narrative is finished. In the early dawn, after hours of rugged traveling, the fugitives reached the plain at the foot of the Himalayas. Here Bhagwan Das parted from his companions,

with the understanding that on their return to civilization they should give out that he had been drowned in the subterranean river. This was prudent and justifiable, for there is little doubt that otherwise the priests would have learned that the old Hindoo was alive, and would have tracked him relentlessly to his death. What subsequently became of him, and whether or not his sister Rana succeeded in escaping from Nepaul and joining him, still is, and probably will remain, a mystery.

By the help of some friendly natives and of an English planter in the Terai, Hawksmoor, Nigel and Muriel reached the railway terminus of Segowlie. And here they found Lorin Brabazon, who had just returned, haggard and broken down, from Katmandu. The meeting with his daughter, of whose death he had been more than convinced, may be better imagined than described. The four went on to Behar, and on the morning after their arrival Hawksmoor was among the missing. He had gone without a word of farewell to his companions, and as likely as not was already on the way to some remote part of the globe.

For good reasons the strange things that the captives of the priests of Durgadeva had seen in Nepaul, and their terrible adventures in that mysterious and forbidden kingdom, were kept as quiet as possible; and though vague rumors got abroad, the truth was known only in a very limited circle. Of course a full report was forwarded to Colonel Raincliffe, and he doubtless communicated with the officials of the Foreign Office in London. But the government took no open steps in the matter, nor was there a revolution or a change of rulers in Nepaul. Rao Bir Khan held the throne, supported by a new Prime Minister. And a new man was put at the head of the army in place of Pershad Singh, who was suddenly and secretly spirited out of existence—which deed was certainly done by, or at the command of, the all-powerful priesthood.

India was by no means a safe place for Nigel and Muriel. The young officer sold his commission, and at an early date he sailed for England with Lorin Brabazon and his daughter. He married Muriel three weeks after their arrival, and the happy couple settled down on a snug little place in Kent. Nigel had safely kept the greater part of the diamonds picked up in the gorge near the Pool of Death, and the sum that these yielded, added to the small income he possessed, made him as independent and prosperous as he could have wished to be. One choice stone he had set in a ring, but it was seldom seen on his finger. It was too constant a reminder of what he would gladly have forgotten—the Kalli river, the purple Lake of Dacca, the monastery of Durgadeva, old Vashtu and his fanatical priesthood, and the tragic deaths of Matadeen Mir, Ali Mirza and Dost Khan.

One morning at breakfast, six months after the marriage, Nigel read aloud from the Times a brief paragraph stating that the eminent explorer, Travers Hawksmoor, had arrived safely at Vancouver from a daring and successful expedition to the heart of unknown Alaska.

"Dear old chap!" he added. "I hope he will look us up one of these days. I wonder why he left us at Behar without a word, like a thief in the night! It was like him, of course, but—"

"But what?" Muriel interrupted, her cheeks flushed and a strange light in her eyes. "Oh, you men are so stupid! I know why he disappeared so suddenly—at least I think I do."

"Why, my darling?"

"Because, long ago, he wanted to marry me," she replied. "It was when we met in Calcutta, but I— I could not care enough for him to be his wife. He said he would always love me, and I think he meant it."

Nigel rose and went round the table to his wife; he stooped down and kissed her.

"I understand," he said. "I was blind before. Poor old chap he acted like a hero! When I think of all that happened, I admire and honor Travers Hawksmoor above living man. And I can pity him, my darling! For what must it be to love and lose a woman like you?"

[THE END.]

A YOUNG BREADWINNER;

OR,

GUY HAMMERSLEY'S TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS.

The Story of a Brave Boy's Struggle for Fame in the Great Metropolis.

By MATTHEW WHITE, JR.

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CHAPTER XIV.

BACK TO NEW YORK.

AND am I not to be considered in these arrangements at all?" broke out Colonel Starr, when Guy had finished. "Who has given you leave of absence, sir?"

"I was not aware that it was necessary for me to ask for such," responded Guy, quietly. "As I said just now, I have made no contract with you, but in consideration of my leaving so suddenly, I will waive the right to receive any pay for to-night's services."

The colonel consented to be mollified by this concession, and so it was settled that Guy should return to New York by the first train the next morning. From Mrs. Hammersley he took money enough to pay his railroad fare, but could not be prevailed upon to accept a cent more.

"No, mother," he said, "there is no knowing how you may be situated. You know I do not trust Colonel Starr. By the way, has he made any settlement for to-night's performance?"

"No. I didn't think to ask him about it. Should I? Is it time?"

"I will speak to Ward about it," said Guy.

So when the four met in the hotel parlor for a few minutes, to talk over the performance before separating to their rooms, Guy drew young Farleigh aside and said: "The colonel led us to understand that a settlement would be made after each evening's entertainment. Has he said anything to your sister about it to-night?"

"No, not till I jogged his memory about it," replied Ward. "And then how much do you think he told me would be Ruth's share?"

"I couldn't guess, but it ought to be a good deal, for the house was just packed."

"That's where you're wrong. Ten dollars is all that is coming to her!"

"Ten dollars!" whistled Guy. "Why, there's some mistake, or else he's deliberately cheated you, as he will us. Didn't you make a fuss about it?"

"Trust me for that. I declared that the size of the house spoke for itself, and that my sister ought to have a hundred dollars as her share of the receipts at the very least. Oh, you know I'm not afraid of the colonel, Hammersley, and I just reared around that box office while Ruth was getting dressed, till I got him pretty mad, I can tell you."

"Well, and what explanation did he give?" demanded Guy, breathlessly, who, for his mother's sake, had a vital interest in the matter.

"Why, he told me that two-thirds of the house was 'papered,' let in free, because it was the first night and he wanted to get a good 'send off,' as he called it. Well, there's one consolation about it," added Ward with a funny little groan, "he can't have a first performance twice."

"But he's equal to trumping up some other excuse to keep us out of our rights," rejoined Guy. "I don't believe half he tells me, and I'll venture to say he's

cleared a big thing by to-night's performance. One of the men about the theatre told me that Brilling was his native town, and that everybody was anxious to see what sort of a show he could get up."

"I suppose that's the reason he opened here," returned Ward, "but I say, old man, what's this I hear about your going back to New York in the morning?"

"It's true; and I'm awfully glad the opportunity has come. Perhaps you'll know some day why I feel so. I don't mind telling you now, though, that I haven't been myself since you've known me."

"I've noticed one thing," returned Ward, "and that is that you've seemed livelier since you've made up your mind to go back to New York. But I shall miss you terribly, Hammersley. I'll have nobody with whom I can rake the colonel over the coals."

"You can do it with me by letter if you will. As soon as I get settled I'll let you have my address, and then I wish you'd let me hear from you now and then, and tell me how things are going. You know mother isn't as distrustful of the colonel as I am, and her accounts of matters are apt to be glossed over for the sake of avoiding rows. There, she wants me, and we'll probably sit up late talking over plans, so don't lie awake for me. Good-night."

It was late when Guy and his mother—for as such she insisted that he must still regard her—separated after that final interview preparatory to his departure.

"But, Guy, why won't you let me give you some money beyond your traveling expenses?" she pleaded. "You will have your board to pay, and may not succeed in getting anything to do for some time."

"Well, is that any reason I should burden you with my support?" returned Guy. "Other boys, younger than I, have made their way in great cities without assistance from their friends. Besides, I know how reduced your stock of money is, and that your expenses will necessarily be heavier with Harold to care for, to say nothing of the cost of the steps you must take to prove that he really belongs to you."

"But what if you are not able to obtain a position, Guy?"

"Don't fret about that. Didn't I get one at the shoe store within twenty minutes after I lost my first one?"

"But you lost that one before the day was over."

"That was only chance, Mr. Inwood happening to come in there. But I mean to do my best to clear away that stain on my name connected with that lost thirteen dollars. I know I didn't steal it. Some one must have, and I mean to make it my business to find out who it was. First, though, I will go to the storage company and get that picture for you."

"Stay at Miss Stanwix's if she has room."

Guy promised and then bade Mrs. Hammersley good-by—for the train left so early in the morning that he would not consent to disturb her then. There were thus left to him but very few hours of sleep, and these he could not utilize. His brain was all afire with the strange happenings of that night which had made him motherless, while still she to whom he gave that name lived.

But his reflections were not all tinged with melancholy. Mingled with them was an inspiring sensation

of independence, of liberty to go back to the city where his fair fame had been sullied, and wrestle with fate till he had removed the blot. So he lay beside sleeping Ward through the remaining hours of darkness, building air castles such as youth only can construct.

Thus there was no danger of his oversleeping, and in the uncertain light of early morning, he arose, packed his satchel, ate a hasty breakfast, got a sleepy porter to carry his trunk over to the station, and was soon whirling back upon the road, which, when he had sped over it the previous day, he thought he should not again traverse in that direction for many months.

The train was not crowded, and as soon as he was settled he proceeded to take account of stock, as it were. It did not take long to do this unfortunately, for he found that he had but fifteen dollars all told.

"But I've heard of fellows who afterwards turned out to be millionaires, coming to New York with not a quarter as much money as that in their pockets."

As the train went on and the day grew older, the cars filled up, and at last the only seat left was the one beside Guy.

"One would think they were all afraid of me," he said to himself, "or else had heard about my experience at the office of the Fireside Favorite."

Then for the want of something better to do he fell to wondering if the seat-mate that he must have before long would be a man or a woman.

"If I was the hero of a story book," he said to himself, "a wealthy merchant would come in at the next station, take a seat next me, pull a roll of bills out of his pocket as he takes out his ticket, which drops on the floor, and I pick up and restore to him instead of pocketing, to be rewarded by the offer of a twenty dollar a week position in the merchant's office."

Guy had just about added the finishing touches to this picture when the train drew up at the next station, and the only passenger to enter that car was a small boy of eleven or twelve, with fair hair, a pale but interesting face, and a carpet satchel so heavily laden that he could barely carry it. Staggering under his burden, he reached Guy's seat and dropped into it, quite exhausted.

But he was up again in a minute as a little girl's head appeared in the doorway, and a trembling voice cried out: "Good-by again, Jack!"

"Oh, Tot, get off, quick! You will be killed," and the boy made a wild rush for the door.

Guy saw him take the little girl in his arms for one brief moment, then he disappeared with her for an instant, and, just as the cars moved off, he came back slowly, trying to look out at the station over the passengers' heads, and with a suspicious glitter in each eye.

CHAPTER XV.

JACK BRADFORD.

Guy's heart was touched by the sight of this very little fellow who was evidently setting out on a long journey by himself. For the moment he forgot his own trials and perplexities, and wondered if he could do nothing to throw a little brightness into the life of his seat-mate.

"Wouldn't you like to sit next the window?" he asked, presently, "I'd just as lief change places with you."

The grateful look that flushed the pale face of the boy amply repaid the older lad for the slight sacrifice involved in making the change.

"Thank you," the little fellow said. "You see I know all the country round here just as well, and I mayn't see it again for a long, long time. Look, off yonder! there are the woods where we go for nuts and Ben Wiggin fell out of a tree and broke his arm last fall."

"Did he?" ejaculated Guy, finding that he was expected to say something.

"Yes, and here's the river where we go swimming," went on the boy, pressing his face close against the glass to catch a last glimpse of it as the train dashed across the bridge with the usual hollow rumbling. "I came near getting drowned there last winter. I skated right into an air hole. I was getting awful cold when

they pulled me out. Did you ever fall through the ice?"

Guy was compelled to admit that he had never afforded anybody the opportunity to make an heroic rescue; but another sort of ice being thus broken, the two boys, the big one and the little one, were soon chatting like old friends.

It did not take long to learn his companion's story. His name was Jack Bradford, he had lost his father and mother a month before, within a week of each other, and there was only his little sister Nellie and himself left. She had been adopted by the family of a kind neighbor, where Jack himself had been given a home till his Uncle John—for whom he had been named and who lived in New York—could be heard from.

"We hadn't seen him since I was a little baby," Jack explained, "and almost the last thing papa said was that I must have his advice. So Mrs. Wiggin wrote to him, but there didn't any answer come for ever so long, because you see we didn't know exactly where to send the letter. When uncle got it though he wrote back and said he was porter in a big Japanese store on Broadway, and that if I'd come on to New York he could get me a place as cash boy there at two dollars a week, an' I could live with him an' Aunt Louisa. But it was awful havin' to leave Nellie behind. I'm goin' to work dreadful hard, though, an' perhaps some day I can make enough to have her come on to New York and live with me."

"What a brave, hopeful little chap it is," Guy said to himself, and contrasting his own lot in life with that of his seat-mate, he took courage and felt that the outlook for him was not so dark as it might have been.

When they reached Harrisburg and changed to an express train they took dinner together, and Guy gave Jack his own lighter satchel to carry while he took the heavy one, and then they found seats together again in the other train, for Guy could not now afford to travel in the Pullmans. Jack never having been away from home before was intensely interested in everything he saw, and not till it grew dark did he let his head fall back and drop off to sleep.

The train was due in New York at 9:20 P. M., and here Jack expected his Uncle John to meet him at the upper ferry.

"You don't know what he looks like, do you?" asked Guy as they left the boat.

"No, but he said he'd be looking out for a little boy with a big bag, and there isn't any other on the train, so I can't miss him," returned Jack, confidently.

But he did miss him, nevertheless, and for the very good reason that Mr. John Bradford was not there. Jack's face grew lengthy as he stood there under the sizzling electric lamp, holding his heavy bag, which he would not let Guy take for fear, without this means of identification, his uncle would pass him over. Everybody went off across West street and was swallowed up in the darkness; only a few cabmen were left, too sleepy to insist that Guy should avail himself of their services. Another boat came in, and still no Mr. Bradford.

"Don't wait," said Jack, trying not to let the lump in his throat make his voice tremble. "I don't want to keep you."

"You don't suppose I'd go off and leave you alone in a strange city, do you?" rejoined Guy, giving the hand he held a reassuring pressure. Then he added: "Do you know where your uncle lives, or only the store address?"

"I've got the letter in my pocket," was the reply. "Maybe it's on there. I don't remember about it."

Jack dropped the bag for an instant while he felt for the letter, which Guy was soon endeavoring to spell out under the glare of the electric lamp. For Mr. John Bradford was doubtless a better porter than scholar, and, as a matter of fact, Jack surpassed him in both writing and spelling. After a little study Guy finally made out that the letter was written from one hundred and ninety something, West Sixty-Third street.

"That must be near Tenth avenue," he added, "so we can get in a car and ride straight up there. Come, I will go with you. Your uncle has probably been detained or else made a mistake himself in the ferry."

"Oh, will you do that?" cried Jack, overjoyed. "Do you know I think you're awful good. And just think, you didn't know me till nine o'clock this morn-

ing. Won't it be ever and ever so much out of your way?"

"No, because I don't know yet just where my way is," laughed Guy, for he knew it was now too late to get in at Miss Stanwix's that night, and had decided that he would take a room at some hotel. "Here comes a car now."

It was after ten when they got out at Fifty-ninth street and started to cover the remaining distance on foot. Jack was terribly sleepy, and Guy himself pretty well worn out. If he could only have foreseen that which lay before him and which was now so close at hand, all sense of fatigue would have been forgotten. On reaching Sixty-Third street and finding the row of apartment houses which bore one-ninety as their predominating number, the problem presented for solution was which of these was the abode of the Bradfords.

Again Guy studied the letter from Jack's uncle, and finally concluded that the final figure was either a seven or a one, and as the one was nearer at hand he decided to try there first. But one difficulty was surmounted only to make way for another.

It was after ten o'clock, as has been said, and the outer door was closed and locked, cutting off access to the bells inside.

But Guy did not allow this to stand in his way long. Taking his cane, he tapped with it against the window on his left, belonging to the lower flat of the building, and through the shade of which the glow of gaslight made itself apparent.

A scream, half stifled, followed the rap, and then the shade was run up, the sash raised, and a girl's head thrust out of the window.

She was about eighteen and rather pretty, but her face was spoiled by the evident knowledge she had of her attractions. Her hair was banged on her low forehead almost to her eyebrows, diamonds that must have been paste glittered in her ears, a horseshoe breastpin gleamed in the gaslight from the street lamp at her throat.

But this lamplight which revealed her display of jewelry to Guy also shone full on his face, and he had scarcely time to make these observations set down above, when the girl cried out: "Oh, have pity on me, and don't give me up to the police. Come in quick, before an officer happens along, and I will confess, I will, truly."

For one brief instant Guy thought the girl must have lost her senses, then the meaning of it all came over him like a flash. He had seen her before. It was at the office of the Fireside Favorite, and the cause of her present terror was the belief that he had come to tell her he knew it was she who had stolen the thirteen dollars. Truly, his befriending of little Jack had brought him speedy reward.

The boy's eyes were round with wonder at these unaccountable proceedings, but he asked no questions, and in two minutes the door was opened, and the girl's voice in the hallway bade them come in.

So absorbed was Guy in the matter which so vitally concerned his own welfare, that for the time being he forgot all about the object that had brought him into the neighborhood, and neglected to make the inquiry that had been on the tip of his tongue when he gave that lucky tap with his cane on the window pane.

"Come into the parlor here," whispered the girl, "and don't make no noise, for I wouldn't have father know for worlds."

She led the way into a room, with chairs stuffed with horsehair standing at stiff angles about the edge, a red and green carpet, a chromo of a girl holding a bunch of grapes, over the mantelpiece, and an engraving of George Washington on horseback, between the windows.

The girl closed the door by which they had entered, then did the same by one leading to the rear of the flat, and finally came up to stand in front of Guy and say in a pleading voice: "Tell me what you want me to do, only don't let them take me to jail."

CHAPTER XVI.

GUY FINDS THE THIEF.

"Then it was you who stole that thirteen dollars from Mr. Inwood, and you knew that I was bearing the blame of it?"

Guy could not avoid giving a bitter ring to his tones

as he stood facing the girl who had been the means of bringing upon him all the mental misery of the past few days.

"Why do you ask me that when you knew it and came here to taunt me with it?"

The girl had dropped into one of the horsehair chairs and sat rocking herself back and forth, with her hands over her face.

Guy was on the point of declaring that he had no such knowledge, but decided that such an admission might be an unwise one for him to make, so he walked over to the girl's chair, and, bending down, said softly:

"Why did you do such a thing? I am sure you are sorry for it, and, if you tell enough to clear me, I will do all I can to prevent their sending you to prison. But first you will have to tell me all about it."

"I will, oh, I will," half sobbed the girl. "It was all on account of these," and she touched one of the paste earrings. "I wanted them, an' didn't have the money. I was foldin' papers right where I could look into Mr. Inwood's office, an' I saw that gentleman pay him some money that he laid right out on his desk, and then pulled down the lid an' went out. I'd never stole nothing in my life, an' didn't think of doin' it then; not till you come in an' walked into Mr. Inwood's room. I didn't see you till just as you were comin' out, and then I thought how I could take the money an' you'd get the blame. Oh, I know it was dreadful wicked, and I've suffered more'n I've enjoyed the earrings. I'll work my fingers to the bone, too, an' pay back the thirteen dollars, if you'll only keep me from bein' sent to jail."

"But you must tell Mr. Inwood about this," returned Guy. "You must clear me. I've come back to New York to see that this blot on my name, placed there unjustly, was removed. Will you promise to do that to-morrow morning as soon as you get to the office?"

"Oh, I don't work there any more," answered the girl, a tinge of red coming into her sallow cheeks. "I'm going to be married. Won't it do if I write it, and say I'll send the money?"

"If you'll do it now, right away, it will, and let me have the paper," answered Guy, who, on reflection, decided that he had better not lose sight of the real culprit for a moment till he had that in his hand which would clear him to the satisfaction of Mr. Inwood and Mr. Fox.

"I ain't much at writin'," admitted the girl, as she took a pen and a bottle of ink from the mantelpiece, "but I'll do the best I kin."

"I'll tell you what to say," suggested Guy, and then ensued a great search for a sheet of paper, which was finally found in the back room.

At last the girl seated herself at the marble-topped table between the windows, from which she had first carefully removed the wax flowers in their glass case. Then Guy began to dictate:

"This is to certify that I—"

Here he paused and inquired her name.

"Do you mean what it is now or what it will be next month?" she looked up to ask, with the nearest approach to a giggle she had given during the interview.

"Your present name, of course," answered Guy; and considerably abashed by his manner of receiving her request, she murmured faintly:

"Lottie M. Crapfel."

"That I, Lottie M. Crapfel, took from Mr. Inwood's desk the thirteen dollars which Guy Hammersley was unjustly accused of appropriating, and will return the same as speedily as possible."

"Is that all?" demanded the girl, looking up anxiously, when, with many suggestions from Guy as to the spelling of the long words, she had completed the above confession.

"All except signing your name at the bottom," answered Guy, "and putting your address and the date."

"But there ain't nothin' about my not bein' sent to jail," she objected.

"Oh, I'll attend to that," Guy assured her. "They didn't send me there, and I didn't even confess. I'll take this down to Mr. Inwood in the morning, and will say all I can in your favor. I'm very much obliged," he added, as he picked up the paper, folded it, and placed it in his breast pocket.

"Obliged? What for?" echoed the girl in surprise.

"Why, for clearing my name in this way. Of course it was your duty to do it, but I can't help but feel grateful. And now I will say good-night, but I mustn't forget to ask you first the question that brought me here. I want to know if John Bradford lives in this house."

The girl dropped the pen with which she had been toying, and sprang to her feet.

"An' is that all you knocked on the winder for?" she asked, her breath coming hard and fast, while her eyes fastened themselves on the pocket where Guy had bestowed the confession as though she had the intention of making a spring to recover it.

"Yes," truth compelled Guy to admit. "You see, this little boy here," turning to Jack, who, during the writing of the letter, had fallen asleep in the rocking-chair, "wants to find his uncle, and we were not sure of the number, so—"

"And then you didn't know I took that money till I told you just now?" cried the girl, in as loud tones as she dared use without fear of awakening whoever might be in the back room.

"I knew it as soon as you screamed and begged me not to send you to jail," confessed Guy, wishing with all his heart that he had postponed inquiring about the Bradfords till he got outside. He could easily have found some one about to give him the information he wanted.

"Then I gave myself away, and you basely took advantage of my innocence to worm that confession out of me. If you are the gentleman you look to be, you will take it out of your pocket and tear it into a hundred pieces before my eyes."

Guy stared at the girl thunderstruck.

"Why, if I should do that," he retorted, Mr. Inwood would still believe that I was the one who took his money."

"Well, you are a man," persisted Lottie Crapfel, "and ought to be willin' to bear the blame to shield a woman. And then you tricked me into makin' that confession."

"Tricked you! You did it of your own free will. If I should give it back, I would be guilty of permitting you to act a falsehood, if not to tell one. Besides, you just now informed me that the memory of your act was a burden on your conscience."

"But then I didn't know you had deceived me in

this way," returned the girl, utterly unabashed by the hollow nature of her reasoning.

Guy saw that the only thing to do under the circumstances was to put on a stern front and refuse to be moved in the least by her pleadings, which, aroused merely by the realization of the fact that she had betrayed herself, lacked the force they might have had but for this circumstance.

"No, Miss Crapfel," he said, "it would be fair neither to you nor myself to undo the good deed you have just done. It has only been your plain duty, and after you have a chance to think it over calmly you must come to look at it as I do."

"Oh, of course you can look at it calmly. You're in luck, and I'm not. Won't you give it back to me? See, I'm on my knees in front of you."

Poor Guy! He was in frightful case indeed. His natural impulse for the sake of peace was to give the paper back, but he felt as he had said that this would not only be unjust to himself, but would be harmful to the girl. And yet how was he to convince her of this? He had tried to do so already, and failed.

"Lottie, what does all this mean? What do you want given back to you, and who is this young man?"

The door leading to the rear apartment had opened suddenly, and a man of about sixty, in a long wrapper, stood on the threshold.

The girl gave one terrified glance upwards, then, with a piercing scream, fell forward on the floor. Jack jumped out of his rocking-chair as if a bombshell had exploded under him, and ran to Guy for protection. Mr. Crapfel hastened to raise his daughter from the carpet, and he had barely placed her on the sofa when hurried steps were heard in the corridor, the door was thrown open, and a crowd of terrified tenants rushed in.

"What's the matter?"

"Where's the fire?"

"Who struck the gal?"

"Send for the police."

These were only a few of the excited exclamations that reached Guy's ear, as the little room filled with the Crapfel's neighbors, most of the men in their shirt sleeves, and a few of the women with their hair done up in curl papers. Oh, why had he made that luckless remark about John Bradford, he asked himself amid the din?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

BOYS AND BUMBLEBEES.

BY A. M. MARRIOTT,

A boy discovered a bumblebees' nest,

A bumblebees' nest,

O dear!

And he tried what every boy tries to do,

When he finds a bumblebees' nest so new,

Their work in a minute he thinks to undo—

How queer!



By taking a stick and routing them out,

By routing them out,

Just see!

But the bumblebees eyed the boy with a stick

And they soon made him tired and sad and sick.

Ah me!



For they clustered around this little lad,

This brave little lad,

You see;

Who was going to wipe them at once all out,

But somehow or other it came about,

That he was the one that went with a shout,

Dear me!

And the bumblebees buzzed around their nest,

Around their nest,

In glee,

To think it so easy to put to flight

This boy who had said 'twas his delight

To knock every bumblebee clear "out of sight,"

Gee whee!



Now, boys, I'll tell you a far better way,

A far better way

You'll say.

A jug with water you'll partly fill

Then set it down all quiet and still

Close by the nest, then run with a will,

Quick away.



When the bees come out to get the fresh air,

The pure, fresh air

To get;

They will circle around awhile in the sun,

Then spying the hole in the jug, each one

Will pop right into it, sure as a gun—

You bet!



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CHAPTER XXII.

THE GOLDEN MOUNTAIN.



WITH the lightest of hearts Tom gathered all together, every moment expecting to hear the tramp of horses' feet and the cheery shout of those who had so opportunely come to his assistance.

But though he broiled and devoured a huge slice of mountain mutton, after which he saddled the Indian pony and fidgeted impatiently for a full hour, the silence remained unbroken as before.

The very throbbing of his own heart sounded like muffled drum beats. And when finally Tom heard the sound of a tolling bell—not clear and distinct, but faint and distant, yet seemingly unmistakable—he began to think it was time to be getting out of such weird surroundings.

Of course he knew that his overwrought imagination, with nerves at a tension as a result of the recent exciting events, was probably the origin of what he seemed to hear. But without further delay he mounted and urged his pony from the spot.

To make his way up the stony declivity on the left, to the spot from which the three shots had been fired was very naturally Tom's first move. It was a toilsome climb, and even the sure-footed Indian pony barely found room to squeeze through the narrow spaces between the irregular masses of volcanic rock which lay scattered in every direction.

Reaching the highest terrace, Tom saw, rather to his surprise, that before him on the west, a wide range of country lay in plain sight. But not a human being or moving object could anywhere be seen, though this was not strange, owing to the broken and hilly nature of the lower land beneath.

Here was the spot from which the fire had proceeded, for three empty brass shells lay on the stony soil behind a natural barricade of rock. Tom dismounted and examined them. Two, he saw at a glance had been ejected from a Winchester, the third from an ordinary Sharpe's carbine, like the one that had belonged to Blueskin.

Tom couldn't understand it at all. Nor did the flinty nature of the soil admit of tracks or hoof prints being seen. Whoever they were that had appeared in time to save his life, they had as mysteriously disappeared. And a great feeling of disappointment came over him.

But all conjecture was vain. Tom took out his pocket compass and tried to study out the situation. Through the Virgin Pass the course had been nearly southwest; and Carl had said that Fort Wager was only a hundred and twenty miles distant.

"Southwest it shall be," decided Tom. And then, too, the flying Utes, as also Montez himself, had taken an almost opposite direction. Whereupon he started his pony down the declivity, vaguely wondering what possibly could happen next.

As the sun climbed higher and higher it seemed to burn away the faint vapors remaining from the morning mists—greatly widening the range of vision.

And clearly outlined against the hard, steely blue of the sky, Tom saw, a little to the right of his intended course, a solitary eminence of such peculiar shape as to be particularly noticeable.

It was sort of cone-looking, as Tom expresses it, as though it had been sawed off transversely about one-third of the way up, leaving a perfectly level top—at least so it looked at the distance from which Tom discerned it. But whether that distance was twenty miles or three score the peculiar rarity of the atmosphere made it impossible to determine.

Tom did not think very much about it at the first, further than to note its isolation and peculiar shape. But toward the close of day the purple tints of the mountain—if so it might be called—changed gradually to a dull golden glow in the rays of the setting sun. And by the peculiar association of ideas sometimes suggested by the most trifling things, there flashed suddenly across Tom's mind a remembrance of John Bruton's talk concerning Flat Top Mountain and its gold!

To follow in detail the incidents of the ensuing three days and nights would be of no interest to the general reader. The weather was perfect—the air more bracing than champagne. True, Tom had begun to be terribly lonely. He wearied of antelope steak cooked over the coals, eaten without salt, and washed down with cold water. But he comforted himself by thinking of the food cooked in a civilized manner that he would dispose of when he reached Fort Wager, and of the raid he would make on the post trader's and army sutler's supplies.

Then again, sleeping on mother earth, with a saddle for a pillow and a blanket as covering, had its objectionable features, despite the sound slumber engendered by fatigue and pure air.

But at Fort Wager all these troubles would end. That is, if—and Tom, breaking off in his meditations as he journeyed on, would cast a side glance at the singularly shaped mountain on his right, which was now assuming definite proportions.

Its slope was so very abrupt, as seen on nearer approach, that the sides appeared almost vertical, though the alternating colors—the reds and yellows and browns of the different strata—suggested irregular outcroppings or ridges, by which it might be possible to make an ascent.

For somehow Tom could not shake off the impression that this was in very truth the Flat Top Mountain that Phil's father had lost his life in seeking—the mountain on the summit of which were doubtless the ruins of El Pueblo Muerte, and possibly the gold of which Father Anselm had written.

And if so, would it not pay him to turn aside a few miles, if only for curiosity? A week or two more of ordinary hardship would not matter very much, at that season of the year. He had arms and ammunition to provide himself with food, and the means for fire building. What more could a plainsman ask?

Thus Tom argued, and imperceptibly day by day his wishes and reasoning swung him little by little further to the west of southwest—the latter being the course, as nearly as he knew, for Fort Wager. Or perhaps the

great eminence itself had a power of attraction not unlike the magnetic mountain mentioned in the story of Sinbad the sailor.

So, some four days after his escape from the Utes, Tom found himself camping down for the night on the edge of a river which ran with great velocity directly toward the singular mountain, with its apparently level top, not over ten miles distant.

Overhead the stars blinked and glittered with the clear, frosty look so noticeable in the higher altitudes. For very companion's sake, Tom had tethered his pony near the camp-fire itself. Even the sound made by the animal as it steadily cropped the short, succulent grass gave him a half sense of relief.

The melancholy hoot of an owl or dismal howl of a coyote occasionally broke the stillness. And as Tom, with a compound of sigh and yawn, threw more fuel on the fire, he heard a little way above him along the river bank a most singular noise—sharp and long drawn out—not unlike what the wail of a lost spirit, or an Irish "banshee," might be supposed to resemble.

What was it? Even the pony, usually unaffected by strange sights and sounds, raised his head and uttered a questioning snort.

Tom himself, free as he was from anything like superstitious notions, felt a sort of "creepiness," stealing over him, as after a short interval, the sound was again repeated with still more weird effect.

No bird or beast of which Tom had ever heard or read could give utterance to such a half human wailing cry. Unless perhaps it was the cougar, which is sometimes said to lure its victim by a prolonged whine that at a distance might suggest the cry of a child lost in the woods.

"Bah, what a coward I am," muttered Tom, repressing a little shiver. To punish himself for his folly, he seized his carbine, and stole cautiously in the direction of the mysterious sound.

But—what! The flicker of a fire in a distant clump of cottonwood! And as he softly advanced—the sound of a human voice!

Was it Indians? Or John Bruton's party? Not the latter, of course, for they were in all probability two or three hundred miles in the opposite direction.

A tilted cart, weather-stained, patched, and in every way showing the marks of hard travel, was the first thing Tom could clearly make out by the light from a huge blaze on the opposite side. A long-eared mule and a bronco, or Indian pony, were grazing at the end of their respective lariats close by.

Tom's heart gave a great leap as he saw these almost certain indications of the presence of whites. Probably it was a trader on his way to the distant fort. But the wagon body prevented him from seeing its owner or owners.

Tom was on the point of rushing forward, when he suddenly remembered that it would be awkward if he were mistaken for the advance guard of a band of attacking Indians, and shot at. He—

A third repetition of the sound which had so startled him rang out. Tom laughed silently. It was a bow being drawn across the E string of a fiddle by an unpracticed hand.

"Yas, it vos funny, but I forget der fiddle vos shove away under der seat till to-night. I break der shtring when I virst starts out, and haf not see noting of him since."

"A German. What under the sun is he doing out here?" thought Tom, trying in vain to catch the reply of the speaker's companion, who seemed to be eating his supper.

"You would like to hear me blay, eh? Mebbe you knows der tune of der 'Arkansaw Trav'ler?' How vos dis?"

And the invisible Teuton began sawing out that well-worn tune with a laborious effort which was doubtless far more satisfactory to himself than his hearers—or one of them at least.

For the other unseen individual muttered a brief remonstrance, and, by the sudden cessation of the sawing, Tom fancied the fiddle had been snatched from the player's hands.

"Oh, you blays him mitout der bow, like he was one guitar. Go ahead, and see how much better you does."

"Picking" the strings banjo fashion, the other, without replying, executed a lively prelude. Then, accompanying himself in the same manner, he began, and

as the clear voice uprose Tom gave a great gasp. It was Phil Amstead, as sure as fate!

CHAPTER XXIII.

A STRANGE MEETING.

Tom Fenwick hesitated a moment before revealing himself to his strangely recovered friend. Meanwhile Phil Amstead's voice rose in a melodious strain:

Summer's fingers softly linger
On the meadows far and wide;
Breezes sighing, daylight dying,
In the hush of eventide;

"Dot vos better than I can sing. Go ahead, Phil!"

Tom's eyes began to grow somewhat moist. Even more so when the words of a familiar old-time song began—"The Dearest Spot on Earth to Me."

Phil had sung the first verse through. But before he started on the second a strong, if rather tremulous voice, somewhere outside the circle of light cast by the camp fire, took up the strain:

I've taught my heart the way to prize
My home—sweet home,
And learned to look with lover's eyes
On home—sweet home.
There where vows are truly plighted,
There where hearts are so united,
All the world beside I've slighted
For home—sweet home.

Before either of the two astonished listeners could recover from their stupefaction, a tall, athletic young fellow, with copper-colored features, and long black hair streaming over his shoulders, strode silently into the firelight.

Dutch Geary involuntarily reached out for his rifle, uttering an exclamation of alarm. Phil, with the violin across his knees, sat staring at the mute newcomer in ludicrous astonishment. Who ever heard before of an Indian singing a verse of a sentimental song in a not unmusical tenor voice?

"Well, how do you like me, Phil?"

The laugh which followed the question in Tom's well-known voice brought Phil partially to his senses. But he did not speak for a moment. He rose and looked Tom over from head to foot, while Geary sat looking on in dumb amazement. And then, with a yell of delight which might have been heard a mile, Phil sprang forward and fairly hugged his recovered friend in his joy.

On the following morning Tom had done ample justice to the breakfast of fried bacon, trout fresh from Salt River, hardtack and unsweetened coffee. Dutch Geary was off in search of soapweed. Phil, with Tom's assistance, was hitching up his bronco, which with the long-eared mule did service on either side of the tongue of the tilted cart.

The various explanations had been made the night before. Only Tom could not understand why, after the Utes and Montez had taken flight, Phil and Geary should have got out of the way so suddenly.

"It was Geary's doing," replied Phil. "'Leaf dem two take care of themselves,' he said. 'We don' want no Injuns along mit us.'"

"Dot vos so. Specially as one vos a woman."

The remark came from Geary, who, with his hands full of a peculiar-looking plant pulled up by the roots, came up in time to hear Phil's explanation.

Then Tom had to speak of Carl—Geary's son by the Indian wife—who had shown himself so brave.

"So! And it vos my Carl you hire to help you get der girl. I haf not seen him this four, five year."

And Geary appeared quite interested in what Tom was able to tell him of his boy.

After which Dutch Geary, making a thick lather with the soapweed roots, applied it plentifully to Tom's hair, face, neck and hands—washing it off a little later with warm water. The effect was almost instantaneous. The dye disappeared from his hair—the stain from his skin. Geary gave a grunt of approval at the metamorphosis, as Tom scrubbed himself dry. "I wants no Injun 'bout me. Make believes or real ones, neider."

"You don't like the noble red man, then," said Tom.

"No." And Geary looked about him a moment. "I t'ink it vos the same," he said, half aloud, "and so it is."

"What is the same?" asked Phil.

"Here where we vos camp. Same place I mean as over twelve year ago your father, Richter and me camp when we vos attack by Injuuns, like I tells you before."

Phil was interested at once. Geary went on:

"Your father stan' close to der bank nigh the willer clump, loadin' his rifle, when der bullet shtrike him. I see him topple over into der stream. Then we haf it han' to han' mit a dozen Apaches."

"I suppose there was no possible chance that father escaped," interrupted Phil, who, standing on the spot designated, was gazing thoughtfully into the dark, rushing torrent below.

"No. If he vos not shot troo his head, he mus' drown. But it is time for ter start. Come, boys."

It need hardly be explained that the destination of the three was Flat Top Mountain, now so near that its banded sides, glowing in the sunlight, seemed not more than a pistol shot distant. Yet it was nearly noon before the base of this strange formation—one of Nature's most wonderful freaks—was reached.

The cattle were unhitched, and the tilted cart disposed in a thick growth of oak and pine, close to the bank of the same river on which they had camped before. Called, by a misnomer, Rio Salinas, or Salt River, this tributary of the Rio Colorado had, some miles further to the south, hollowed out for itself one of those wonderful canyons which are among the "sights" of the West. Where they were encamped, however, the river banks were of ordinary height, and thickly wooded.

Rising directly from it, and indeed forming a mile or two of the eastern bank, was the mountain, as I am obliged to call it for lack of a more fitting name. Elsewhere I have spoken of it as a mesa, which Tom tells me is incorrect. A mesa, he tells me, is a tract of land isolated, so to speak, by reason of a vast canyon on either side, too wide to be spanned—the sides too steep to be scaled. A mesa properly is not elevated above the surrounding country, as are the vast table lands of New Mexico and Arizona. Indeed, Flat Top Mountain had more the appearance of one of these smaller tracts of table land standing alone by itself.

But, however, this is at first sight it certainly appeared as though their long and tiresome journey had been taken in vain, if merely attaining to the summit from five to six hundred feet above them had been their only object. With the exception of a few irregularities and projections, every side seemed almost straight up and down, as a subsequent journey around its base proved to them.

Yet there must have been a way of reaching the top a century or more ago. And what could it have been?

At the foot, on the northern side, an acre or more of ground was covered by immense masses of mingled quartz and sandstone, which perhaps had been riven from the face of the beetling wall by a thunderbolt. Dutch Geary's idea was that here in other days had been a way of reaching the top—destroyed by some erratic shaft of lightning. Yet this, after all, was purely conjectural.

"There vos not'ing for it but go back so poor as we haf come," he grumbled, as on the second night of their arrival the three assembled again about the camp fire.

"Yet my father, you say, was sure of reaching the top," said Phil Amsted, thoughtfully.

"Yes. But he kep' to hisself how it vos to be done. Time 'nuff to tell how, when we get there, he say. And der secret die mit him."

"If he is dead," murmured Phil. For a curious fancy sometimes occurred to him that in some way James Amsted had escaped death either by Indian bullet or rushing tide.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TOM'S DREAM.

The disappointment did not affect Tom very much, as far as failing to secure the gold of Flat Top Mountain was concerned. He knew that he stood in need of no more fortune than would probably come to him some day when he returned to claim it—if he decided so to do after tiring of this free, wild life.

Yet he would have liked to stand on the plateau above him—to have wandered through the ruins of El Pueblo Muerto. But if it was not to be—why, that ended it. And far less depressed than his two com-

panions, Tom rolled himself in his blanket, with his feet to the fire, and his head pillowed on his saddle. Then he drifted off into slumberland, lulled by the monotonous sound of the river's flow.

Tom had a most singular dream, and one so vivid that he seemed to be looking on at an actual scene, instead of a fanciful picture emanating from his own brain.

He dreamed that he stood alone on the river bank very near where they were camped. Moored to the trunk of an overhanging tree was a large and well-constructed raft, crowded with human beings, who in dress and personal appearance were unlike any he had ever seen.

There were men, women and children. The faces of the older ones were of a Spanish cast, and distinguished by a strange pallor, and by the look that comes of utter despair. Some were sitting upon curiously-carved chests or boxes. Others had wicker panniers containing certain of their household goods. In the midst stood a venerable-looking man in priestly apparel, who held in one hand an ebony crucifix, which he occasionally pressed to his lips.

On the shore was a little company of Indians, lighter in color and milder of feature than the ordinary. Tom knew—he cannot tell how—that these were of the peace-loving Moqui tribe. By some irresistible power, Tom thought he was led to step on the raft with the others. But no one gave heed to his presence.

Then the priest signed with his hand to the Moquis. The raft was pushed away from shore, and slacked down the swift current by a rawhide rope—a turn of which round a tree trunk was held by the Indians on shore. Thus the raft, kept close in to the bank, in the slower waters, was suffered to drift around a jutting projection of the face of the mountain itself, that shut out the Moquis from sight.

Still the line was slowly paid out, and a strong eddy current drifted the raft with its living freight into a deep cleft in the river face of the great mesa.

To Tom's astonishment, a number of men, similar in dress and appearance to those on the raft, stood on a shelving rock awaiting their coming. But there were no joyful greetings. The priest raised his crucifix, and for a brief moment every head was bowed. Then he stepped ashore, followed by the passengers. Tom himself hung back—he could not tell why. And as he stood watching the group, they seemed to fade gradually away—and he awoke.

The singular dream made a most vivid impression—not only on Tom's own mind, but upon that of Phil, who listened to its recital on the following morning with eager interest.

"I wish we could get a look around the bulge there," he said, with a glance at the jagged projection which hid the most of the river side of the rocky height from view.

"We could—from the other side of the river," returned Tom.

But there were no means of crossing the mile of onrushing, turbulent water, which broadened as it swept downward to the Rio Colorado.

Matter-of-fact Dutch Geary was disposed to ridicule the two for placing any importance upon the 'baseless fabric of a vision.'

"Vot you tinks much of in der day gets mix up mit der shleep—dot vos all," he said, half contemptuously, as Phil finished speaking.

"Then I suppose you dream about the little blue keg being empty," retorted Phil. For Dutch Geary's "bitters" were all gone, and his daily lamentations thereat had grown rather monotonous in Phil's ears.

Geary sighed heavily, and rubbed the low portion of his body.

"It vos my dyspepsy gomes mitout der bitters. Mebbe he shtrikes some trader on der way back, and I buys a leedle medicine."

"On the way back! You're not going to give up so soon?" exclaimed both his hearers in a breath.

"It vos no good to shstay. We haf not wings like der birds—we cannot crawl der wall of rock as a fly. Direc'ly der mule haf got up his feed, off we goes."

"Well, that won't be for two or three days, anyway," Phil returned; "and who knows what may happen before then?"

"Der shky may fall, and we catch der larks," grumbled Geary, who was decidedly out of humor at the poor result of their long and toilsome journey.

Tom made no response. He was looking attentively

through the prospector's field glass at something in the distance.

"What is it, Tom?"

"Looks like Indians on horseback. But they are so far off I can't make out plainly."

Geary snatched the glass hastily from Tom, and pointed it in the direction indicated.

"Dot vos no Injun. Buff'lo, by the great horn spoon!"

CHAPTER XXV.

A HUNT AND A VOYAGE.

All was now excitement. The dream and the possible gold of Flat Top Mountain were for the time forgotten in the reality of genuine live buffalo not much over five miles away. Carbines and revolvers were examined and cartridge belts slung. There were only two horses, so, after briefly imparting certain instructions to Tom and Phil, Geary started on ahead, making a long detour to get to leeward of the gasping herd, which numbered about twenty.

The boys' impatience would not allow them to remain long behind. Very soon they took their own departure from camp, with high anticipations of baked buffalo hump for supper.

Each led his pony, keeping concealed as far as possible behind the irregularities of the rolling land.

And in due time the three reached the entrance to the shallow ravine where the herd were feeding. Geary stole cautiously round to the opposite end. Tom and Phil, mounting their respective steeds, awaited his signal.

A long, low whistle was soon heard. The leader of the drove—an immense bull bison—lifted his shaggy head, uttering a snort of alarm.

"Charge on 'em!" yelled Phil, with carbines unslung and at full cock, the impetuous hunters dashed forward.

The herd at once broke into a lumbering trot, which increased to a gallop as the ponies, as much excited as their riders, gained rapidly on them.

Tom rushed his horse to the side of one of the hairy moustersons, and, remembering Geary's instructions, fired two shots in quick succession, aiming as nearly as possible behind the fore shoulder.

The buffalo tottered and fell heavily on its side. Tom, unable to contain himself, uttered a triumphant yell which was not echoed by Phil. For that unfortunate youth, after wildly firing right and left into the thick of the herd, had a cartridge "jam" in his carbine.

Madly flinging the useless weapon to the ground, Phil, after escaping the furious charge of a buffalo that he had wounded, drew his revolver from its holster, and tumbled over a half-grown cow.

Geary's rifle cracked as the herd dashed through the head of the defile, and a buffalo fell as a matter of course.

It was long after noontide when the party, flushed with victory, got back to camp, bringing with them the hides of the slain animals, as also a goodly supply of the choicer cuts from the younger and tenderer cow that Phil had killed.

In the morning, Geary stretched and "pegged" the skins, from the under side of which he carefully cleaned the bits of flesh and fat. After which he briefly announced his intention of trying to follow up the herd alone.

"I did not think shtraight yesterday, or I would shoot more times. Now I remember I want tree, mebbe four, more skin. And while der mule shall be rest, I goes on der hunt."

Neither Tom nor Phil had the slightest objection. Indeed, they were rather pleased than otherwise, as Geary's absence would enable them to carry out a certain project they had been quietly talking over between themselves.

So the blue keg was filled with river water, and together, with a few stores from the wagon, packed upon one of the horses. Mounting the other, Geary took the loaded animal in tow.

"Don't you do no mischiefs while I vos gone," he called out. "Maybe I come back in one—maybe in two day. Look out der mule not stray off. Good-bye!"

"Happens just right, eh, Tom?" laughed Phil. And then the two began operations.

Selecting a suitable spot on the river bank, Tom felled half a dozen small cottonwoods, which he cut

into proper lengths and rolled to the water's edge. Meanwhile Phil, with his sharp hunting knife, proceeded to cut into strips the skins of the two buffalos slain by the boys. These knotted together made a line more than sufficiently long for their purpose.

A few shorter strips were used to lash the logs together, after they were pushed into the water. Some wide pieces of bark, laid across the logs to form a platform, completed the raft itself.

One end of the hide rope was made fast to a tree on the verge of the river—the rest was coiled down on the raft.

Then a haversack was filled with a few necessities their carbines slung over their shoulders, and, taking with them the axe, as well as Geary's field glass and prospecting tools, the intrepid voyagers committed themselves to the raft, having provided poles to be used if needful, though depending principally upon the line. The poles at first were not found necessary. The downward current, less strong near the shore, seemed to drive the raft close in to the bank. Slowly Tom, being the stronger of the two, paid out the line.

"If we find we have been on a fool's errand, we can pull ourselves back, and Geary need not be the wiser," was Phil's only remark, as the raft swung slowly round the projecting cliffs which hid the river face of the great sandstone wall from their view.

"We should have to account for stripping up the buffalo hides, though," returned Tom, with a nervous laugh. In truth he was not thinking just then of explanations—he was only wondering what would become of them both if the stretching line should happen to part.

For with a turbulent roar the river rushed past them like a mill race—their black waters seething and boiling over many a smooth upstanding boulder further out in the stream. And as the raft drew fairly by the projection, a glance down the current showed that in the course of successive ages it had worn its way deeper and deeper, till on either hand rose the frowning walls of a mighty canyon.

But something of far more importance claimed the attention of both a moment later.

In the face of the cliff was a vast rift or cleft—probably brought about by some terrible convulsion of nature centuries before. The continuous action of the water had worn away the soft sandstone on either side of the chasm till a sort of bowl-shaped opening was the result. And with feelings of astonishment too deep for words, they saw a shelving ledge rock at the further side of this strange opening.

Tom half expected that in another moment it might be thronged with the strange, despairing looking people of his dream. But Phil, excitedly seizing one of the poles, pushed the raft to the natural landing-place, and sprang ashore with a shout of exultation!

"Don't this beat Sinbad the Sailor all hollow?" he exclaimed, and Tom nodded—he had no words at command just then.

Leading up from the shelving ledge was a flight of rude steps, cut in the sandstone and shale, following the irregular course of the cleft.

It did not take long to secure the raft. Then, dividing the prospector's tools between them, the pair, too much excited for conversation, began the ascent.

Strange and conflicting thoughts were thronging Tom's brain, as, taking the lead with the axe in one hand and a pick in the other, he toiled upward. They two were probably the first who had ever followed in the footsteps of the mysterious and unhappy people who more than a century before were exiled from home and friends. What awaited them on the summit of El Plana Corona, where the feet of modern day explorer had never yet trod? What ghastly sights would El Pueblo Muerte—the town or city of the dead—reveal? And—the quartz-bearing gold—was it there? Or was the whole story a myth?

Every now and then the strange stairway made abrupt turns and curves, to conform with the irregularities of the great fissure. And here and there, where the formation admitted, resting-places had been hewn out, where from time to time the two stopped to breathe.

The air was close and confined, but overhead a narrow strip of blue sky gave promise of abundant breathing room. Nine hundred steps in all! Then, with a simultaneous exclamation the adventurous couple emerged into the open air!

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

EDITORIAL CHAT

AND CORRESPONDENCE.

A slight change in the departments has been made in this week's issue of Army and Navy. It is a result of the contest in which we asked our readers' opinion regarding their choice of stories and departments. That contest proved conclusively that but few were interested in the stamp column. It being our aim to give our readers just what they wish we have abolished the stamp department and consolidated "Editorial Chat" and "Correspondence."

Commencing with No. 29 the naval and military cadet stories will be considerably lengthened, that being the earnest desire of a vast majority of readers who are deeply interested in the fascinating stories of cadet life at West Point and Annapolis. Other changes tending to greatly improve Army and Navy are contemplated, and will be made in due time.

The beginning of the new year will see the monarch of juvenile publications a monarch indeed. It is far and away the best and brightest boys' publication now with its forty-eight pages, its splendid illustrations, and its special series of cadet novelettes, but there are even better things in store, and our young friends will do well to keep an eye upon it.

In this number will be found the prize article on amateur journalism. Mr. Fargo, the writer, has given a terse, comprehensive and deeply interesting description of the needs of a beginner in amateur publishing. He gives in detail the articles necessary and the current prices, also advice based on practical experience. Several other letters submitted in the contest will be published. In passing let us remind you that an amateur short story contest is now running in the "Amateur Journalism" department.

Next week will be printed the opening chapters of a new serial by William Murray Graydon. It is entitled "The Cryptogram. A Stirring Tale of Northwest Canada," and is written in that happy vein for which the talented author is famous. It is needless to dwell upon the literary merit and skill of Mr. Graydon. His host of readers and warm admirers throughout all America give proof enough. If you would like to confer a favor upon your friends tell them of Mr. Graydon's new serial.

J. A. S., Philadelphia, Pa.—The business of custom-house broker is considered a good one. In all ports of entry there are many who derive considerable income from this profession. As you are now engaged in a broker's office we think you could not do better than to

devote yourself to it. However, experience should teach you whether the work is to your taste.

"B. B. J. Clif," New York.—1. The United States navy list gives one hundred and thirty-three vessels of all classes. 2. It is impossible to say which is the best warship afloat. Several nations claim the honor of possessing the best craft.

R. E. T., Boston.—Defective eyesight necessitating the use of glasses is a decided bar to admission into either the army or navy. Officers and men seen wearing glasses have contracted the necessity after their admission into the service.

A Reader, Rochester, N. Y.—1. The expense varies. In 1896 it was \$100 at West Point and \$196 at Annapolis. 2. See series of special articles on Rules and Regulations recently published in Army and Navy.

"Roylance," Cincinnati, O.—Read the special articles on Rules and Regulations governing admission into the Naval and Military service recently published in Army and Navy.

C. S., Fairboro, N. J.—1. The pay of a second lieutenant in the United States Army is, mounted, \$1,500, not mounted \$1,400 annually. 2. Write to the War Department.

H., Jersey City, N. J.—A graduate of a common school should be able to pass the required examination for admission into the Annapolis Naval Academy.

Student, Toledo, Ohio.—1. Sixty five per cent. 2, 3 and 4. Write to the Secretary of War for this information. 5. Algebra and geometry. 6. No.

H. O., Philadelphia, Pa.—1. We do not contemplate publishing stories by the authors mentioned. 2. The subjects have not yet been selected.

K. J., Binghamton, N. Y.—It would be far cheaper to buy the chalk. Consult any dealer in drawing materials.

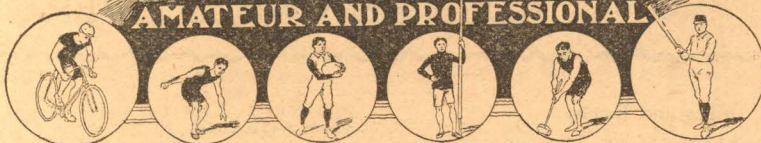
S. M. C., Hillsdale, Mich.—Your suggestion has been taken under consideration.

G. E. W., Knoxville, Pa.—No.

Arthur Sewall

ATHLETIC SPORTS

AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL



(Brief items of interest on local amateur athletics at the various colleges and schools are solicited. Descriptions and scores of match games will also be published if sent to this department.)

Cycling Notes.

To the general riding public the introduction of the chainless bicycle of the model which experts almost universally unite in asserting will be the standard for future cycle construction has been hailed as the cycling event of the year, apart from matters pertaining to the race track. That it is practicable few doubt. Bevel gearing is a common means of transmitting power in many kinds of machinery, and its application to the bicycle has no insurmountable drawbacks. A hollow shaft is furnished at each end with a gear wheel the cogs of which are cut on a bevel. One of these engages the wheel on the pedal shaft, the cogs of which are also cut on the bevel, while the other engages the bevel wheel cut on the axle of the driving wheel. The speeding up of the mechanism is effected by the disparity of size between the wheel on the pedal shaft and that in connection with it, but a variation in the sizes of the other wheels causes a slight additional gearing-up. The hollow shaft runs on ball bearings placed under the gear wheels at both ends. A means of adjustment is provided to take up any looseness that may be occasioned by wear. When the wheel is put together a plentiful supply of a special preparation of the consistency of crude vaseline is distributed about the gears and acts as a permanent lubricant. A careful rider will probably not find it necessary to attend to lubricating his wheel once a twelvemonth.

One of the new cycling novelties just introduced might be called a sort of suspension tire. The tire is said to weigh only one pound more than the regular pneumatic tire, and some of the virtues claimed for it are such that, if it can fill the bill, other tire-makers may as well prepare to adapt themselves to a new order of things. Several of the tire-makers have seen the invention, and at this writing none of them have announced their intention to divert from their beaten path. The tire is not pneumatic, and consequently does not have to be blown up. For the same reason, it will not puncture. There is an outer layer of soft rubber, which is so arranged that the claim is made for it that it will not throw mud up the back of the man or woman on the wheel. There is a semi-circular laminated wooden rim, and over the open part is drawn a rubber diaphragm, secured by expansion rings from side to side of the hollow wood. The inner rim, which rests on the rubber diaphragm, and to which the spokes are attached, is about as large as a carpenter's pencil. The maker says that the tire will prove to be just as resilient as the pneumatic tire, and that it is practically indestructible. Even if the outer shoe does wear out, it can be replaced at a small cost.

It is a fact not recognized by many wheelmen that a brake is more needed with a high gear than with a low one. Every one who has ever changed from a low gear to a higher one is aware of the greater impulse given to the bicycle by each revolution of the pedal as the gear is raised, and it must be evident to all that the difficulty of slowing down is increased in the same proportion. In city streets it is often necessary to stop quickly, or at least greatly to reduce one's speed, and when an emergency arises the man with a high gear may find a brake uncommonly handy.

The bicycle has entered the navy, and from present appearances has found a permanent place. Every ship in the service has its quota of wheelmen, who spend their leisure time on their silent steeds when the vessels are in the harbor. When the ships are at sea the wheels are safely stowed away, either below decks or in the quarters of the officers and men.

The wheelmen are not only the younger officers and the men before the mast, but many of the commanding officers of the ships who saw service during the war have taken to the bicycle.

Gridiron Items.

Kicking goal after a touchdown has been made is a tame proceeding to which entirely too much importance is attached.

Noted players and authorities on the game have given this particular play a good deal of attention during the past few weeks, and they have decided, practically unanimously, that the two points are earned entirely too easily, and that even one point is a rich reward for so little effort. Therefore, they have agreed that a change is necessary, and the proposed new scheme of counting will be productive of more artistic kicking than ever before.

Ever since football has been a game kicking goal after the touchdown has been in vogue, and thousands of devotees who are mystified by the intricacies of field play regard themselves as fairly well acquainted with the sport when they come to know that carrying the ball across the enemy's goal line counts four, and a successful kick between the two posts and above the bar registers a total of six points.

Kicking should be an important feature at a football game—the name implies as much—but even under the present regulations, which are far more favorable to it than the old ones, it is only of secondary importance. Tackling, guarding, aggressiveness and manoeuvring, with brute strength and a clear head to back them up are most in evidence. What man is there with soul so dead who can see eleven men striving to carry an egg-shaped leather ball through another crowd of eleven, see them push, pull, grab and throw each other, see almost mortal combat just to gain a few points, just to win a little fame for their respective colleges, perchance, and not be thrilled with excitement? Every such spectator then takes a quiet breathing spell while the only lucky work in the whole affair is done. He sees the oval go between the posts or miss them altogether, just as the player happens to have the knack or otherwise. Kicking this kind of a goal is knock—there is no other name for it. The merest grammar-school boy has often been seen to do it persistently with ease, whereas an experienced, scientific line player could not accomplish it once in ten times.

The only meritorious kick is the goal from the field. Then the enemy is kept back, head work is used to get the ball to the player who attempts it, and he has to be quick as well as accurate. The play is made when the excitement of the crowd is at fever heat and is often a crowning feat after a series of almost superhuman and thrilling efforts. The only pity is that it is not attempted oftener. Spectacularly it is more attractive than the touchdown, and practically it is almost as difficult.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

ALL THE WORLD OVER.

Miles and Knots.

A statute mile is 5,280 feet long. It is our standard of itinerary measure adopted from the English, who in turn adopted it from the Romans. A Roman military pace, by which distances were measured, was the length of the step taken by the Roman soldiers, and approximately five feet long; a thousand of these paces was called in Latin a mille. The English mile is therefore a purely arbitrary measure, enacted into a legal measure by a statute passed during the reign of Queen Elizabeth; it has no connection with any scale in nature.

A nautical mile, on the other hand, is equal in length to one-sixtieth part of the length of a degree of a great circle of the earth. But the circumference of the earth is nowhere a true circle; its radius of curvature is variable; hence the nautical mile, as a matter of fact, depends for its length upon the shape as well as the size of the globe sailed over; and hence, strictly speaking, the length of the nautical mile should vary with the latitude, from 6,046 feet at the equator to 6,109 feet at the pole. Such extreme accuracy is not necessary in navigating, and cannot be well attained without undue labor. The English Admiralty, therefore, have adopted 6,080 feet as the length of a nautical mile, which corresponds with the length of one-sixtieth of a degree—or one minute of arc—of a great circle in latitude 48 degrees. The United States Coast Survey has adopted the value of a nautical mile "as equal to one-sixtieth part of a degree on the great circle of a sphere whose surface is equal to the surface of the earth." This gives the length of one nautical mile as equal to 6,080.27 feet, which is very nearly the value of the Admiralty mile adopted in the English navy. Practically the nautical mile is 800 feet longer than the statute mile. In other words, one nautical mile is equal to 1.1515 statute miles; or one statute mile is equal to 0.869 nautical miles. Multiply nautical miles by 1.1515, and the product will be statute miles; or, multiply statute miles by 0.869, and the product will be nautical miles.

The Lions Woke Up.

A lion-tamer's power lies not only in his courage and self-possession, but in his understanding the temper of the animals. It is perilous for anyone but the tamer himself to attempt any liberties with them, however indifferent and well-disposed they may seem.

A noted lion-tamer relates in his memoirs a terrible adventure. He was sitting at the entrance of the menagerie, and the entertainment was about to begin, when he heard a piercing cry. This was followed by a furious roaring, and cries of "Help, help!" by many voices. He rushed in, and this is an account of what happened:

"All eyes were turned toward one of the cages. It was appalling. A poor fellow in my employ had been lifted from the ground, and was suspended outside the cage in the claws of four lions, one of which was eating his arms. One glimpse of that horrible sight and I ran, reflecting in a second that to go round by the cages and get in by the ordinary entrance would involve a fatal delay, and I decided on the desperate expedient of raising the grating on the side toward the spectators, and so crawling into the cage.

"How I did it, how it happened that I was not caught and mangled, I do not know. But suddenly I was on my feet in the midst of that savage feast, with neither stick nor whip, and only my fists for weapon. I struck and I commanded. The lions fell back and left fall their prey. I hurried out of the cage, and was greeted with enthusiastic applause. I thought the poor fellow was dead. But he was taken to the hospital. His wounds were dressed, and he recovered. Then I asked him how it happened. He said:

"When I passed those gentlemen"—he always spoke

courteously of the lions—"I wished to caress them. Three were asleep, and one was awake; that one misunderstood my intention. He waked his comrades, seized me, and but for you I should certainly have made a meal for them."

The heroic lion-tamer goes on to relate that the king, being informed of his act, decorated him publicly, and the people feted him and loaded him with honors. On this occasion, he says, though he was not used to being afraid, he was so agitated that his limbs shook; he was faint, and could hardly see. He soon recovered himself, however, and his pleasure in this public recognition of his bravery was marred only by a regret that his father could not be there to enjoy it.

All Underground.

The most remarkable canal in the world is the one between Worsley and St. Helen's in the North of England. It is sixteen miles long and underground from end to end.

In Lancashire the coal-mines are very extensive, half the county being undermined, and many years ago the managers of an important colliery thought they could save money by transporting the coal underground instead of on the surface. So the canal was constructed and the mines drained at the same time. Ordinary canal boats are used, but the power is furnished by men, and the method of propulsion is unique. On the roof of the tunnel are placed cross-pieces at regular intervals. The men lie on their backs upon the loads of coal and push with their feet against the cross-bars on the roof, and thus they move forward the barges.

Ages of Animals.

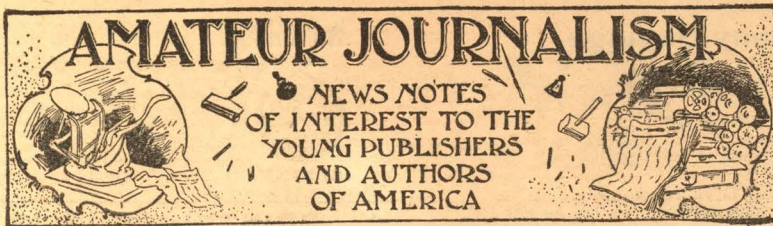
According to some naturalists, the length of life of animals is as follows:

The rabbit lives from six to seven years.
The squirrel from seven to eight years.
The fox from fourteen to fifteen years.
The cat from fifteen to seventeen years.
The dog from sixteen to eighteen years.
The bear and wolf, eighteen to twenty years.
The rhinoceros from twenty to twenty-two years.
The horse from twenty-two to twenty-five years.
The hen from twenty-five to twenty-eight years.
The porpoise from twenty-eight to thirty years.
The camel and cow one hundred years.
The tortoise one hundred and ten years.
The eagle one hundred and twenty years.
The elephant four hundred years.
The whale one thousand years.

Cork.

The cork oak is said to grow and even thrive in America, but the material obtained is such an inferior quality that all attempts to raise it here have been abandoned in favor of the product from southern Europe. Spain and Portugal produce the best corks. The finest cork oak forests are found in the interior of these countries, those near the coast being liable to the attacks of a parasite which quickly destroys them.

The trees are not barked until they are fifteen years old; after that they can undergo the spoilation every three years without detriment. A strong, healthy tree will yield its bark for one hundred and fifty years. The season for stripping the tree is in the summer, and the work gives employment to a large number of men, who can earn on an average about 60 cents a day. The process of manufacture is simple. It consists of boiling the bark in sheets to thicken and make it more elastic, after which the corks are stamped out of the sheets. All over southern Europe many articles, such as coffins, kitchen pails, pillows, shoes, boots and drinking vessels are made from cork.



A SHORT STORY CONTEST.

To encourage amateur writers in the United States, Army and Navy offers a monthly prize of five dollars in gold for the best short story written and submitted by an amateur author. By "amateur authors" is meant those who are identified with the amateur press of the United States in a general sense, and who are not regular contributors to professional publications. Stories should not exceed one thousand words in length, and can be on any subject. Manuscript for the first contest must reach this office on or before December 13, 1897. Address all communications, "Short Story Contest" Army and Navy, Street & Smith, publishers, No. 238 William street, New York City.

The "Amateur Journalism" Prize Contest

The following article sent in by C. R. Fargo of St. Paul, Minn., has been adjudged the best and most comprehensive submitted in this contest. It is clear and succinct, and gives in detail the outfit necessary to publish an amateur newspaper of average size. The article should prove of great benefit to the aspiring amateur journalist. Several other articles submitted will be published in the next number of Army and Navy.

The Prize Winner,
C. R. FARGO,
St. Paul, Minn.

Three intelligent boys with plenty of grit and about fifty dollars in money, can undertake the publication of an Amateur paper with every possibility of success. Lay your plans in a business-like manner, giving if possible some distinguishing feature to your paper.

OUTFITS.

Amateur printing outfits, including press, may be had at from fifty dollars up. Many beginners are arriving at the fact that having the presswork of their first six months' issues done at a regular printing office, is more profitable by far than buying a cheap outfit and wasting valuable time in producing a very poor sheet.

A few figures will perhaps go well to convince many of this fact. Say you pay \$1.50 per month for presswork; in two years you will have expended what you would have paid for your press. But to this sum must be added the cost of imposing the pages in a chase at the printers, say 50 cents each issue. As this seems to me the very best course which the amateur publisher can pursue, I respectfully submit the same to the reader's opinion, and will, in this article base my plan on this idea.

COMPOSING.

Young compositors will do well in having a printer instruct them in the first principles of their work, and by observance of the following rules, they can do nicely:

Space uniformly between words. Keep nicks on type out or toward you. Begin every sentence with an em quad. Be careful to divide words only on syllables. Keep rule between lead and new line. Learn your case thoroughly.

ARRANGEMENT OF PAPER.

Paper is manufactured in regular sizes, 24x36, 20x42, etc. A convenient size for an amateur paper is four pages 9 x 12 in. Take a sheet of paper the size of the intended publication, mark upon it the different columns and head these as it is intended to devote space. Set type in galleys according to this diagram, tie each page firmly and carry to the printers.

Set editorials in small pica, and the rest of the paper in Brevier. If the serial on the first page is short, put that page in small pica also. Never print less than 500 copies. A bright amateur paper once devoted its eight columns as follows:

Serial or short story, two columns; editorial and announcements, one; current anecdotes, one; items of interest, one; exchanges headed with "Scissors and Paste, in Amateur Journalism," one; historical stories and anecdotes, chronology of past month, one; advertisements, one.

ADVERTISING.

Advertising should be solicited from dealers in articles which young people are apt to buy—sporting and novelty houses, booksellers, etc. Twenty-five cents per inch, or one cent per word for each insertion is a cheap rate. Your advertising should by all means pay for your presswork. When display ads are required, have them set up by the printer who does your presswork. Study the columns of other amateur papers and take what you think would attract readers.

SUBSCRIBERS AND ISSUES.

Subscribers will come slowly and surely. Do not reduce your subscription rates as an extra inducement. For a monthly paper charge 25 cents a year. A good plan is to place in the hands of probable subscribers sample copies of the first issues of your paper. Monthly issues are by all means the best as they give you more time for collection, preparation and announcement. It might be well also to issue quarterly, or on special occasions, an extra edition of your paper to be sold at 5 cents per copy.

ESTIMATE FOR COMPOSING ROOM OUTFIT.

WHAT TO BUY.

50 lbs. 8-point, or brevier, body type	\$19.00
10 lbs. 11-point, or small pica, body type	3.30
1 heading for paper	1.50
1 sub head	.35
1 font 8-point brevier gothic	1.60
1 font 10-point or long primier gothic	1.40
1 font type for date	1.50
1 font type for headings	2.00
3 fonts metal border (headings)	3.00
10 ft. brass rule	.50
20 brass dashes	1.20
2 pair news cases (second hand)	2.00
4 2-3 job cases	2.40
2 double column brass galleys	3.75
2 6-inch composing sticks	1.50
10 pounds six-to-pica leads	1.00
1 lead case	.75
1 imposing stone	2.00
1 proof planer and mallet	.65
1 proof roller, ink and slab	1.10
1 benzine can (safety) and brush.	1.50
Total	\$52.00

The type above mentioned is usually subject to a discount of 25 per cent. The other articles from 15 to 25 per cent. discount.

Funny Sayings.

Feed and Fed.

Teacher—"What tense is feed?"

Boy—"Present tense."

Teacher—"What tense is fed?"

Boy—"Past tense."

Teacher—"Correct. Give an example."

Boy—"After the man feed the waiter he got fed."

Marriage Popular.

Little Girl—"I wonder what's th' reason all our school teachers go an' get married."

Little Boy—"I guess it's 'cause they likes to boss."

The Old Man's Hobby.

Adorer (anxious to please the old gentleman)—"Has your father any hobby?"

Sweet Girl—"Yes, he has, and it's such a funny one. It's dogs."

Adorer (delighted)—"I am somewhat of a dog-fancier myself. Which is his favorite breed?"

Sweet Girl—"It changes constantly. Every time I'm a year older he gets a bigger dog."

Plenty of Range.

Mrs. De Flatte—"The janitor won't let the children step into the hall a moment. You told me the children would have plenty of range."

Agent (St. Famlie Flats)—"Yes'm. The range is in the kitchen."

The Detective Umbrella.

Customer—"Lookee here! The first time I used this miserably cheap umbrella I bought of you, the black dye soaked out and dripped all over me."

Dealer—"Mein frient, that was our new patent self-detective umbrella. If any one should steal that, you'd know him by his clothes."

Rather Stale Bread.

Mrs. Slimdiet—"The boarders are coming in. Cut the bread, Matilda."

Miss Slimdiet—"Ma, I saw in a society paper to-day that bread should be broken, not cut."

Mrs. Slimdiet—"That's the style now, eh? Very well. Where's the axe?"

True After All.

Winks—"There's a man who worked for a street car company for forty years. Now he is too old to work, but the company pays him a living income right along."

Minks (emphatically)—"I don't believe it."

Winks (calmly)—"He is one of the stockholders."

Washed Her Hands.

Mistress—"Where is the spoon with which you mixed this pudding?"

New Girl—"I mixed it wid me hands, mum."

Mistress—"Humph! I hope you washed them."

New Girl—"Yes, indeed, mum, I had to. They was all stuck up wid puddin'."

CONSUMPTION CURED.

An old physician, retired from practice, had placed in his hands by an East India missionary the formula of a simple vegetable remedy for the speedy and permanent cure of Consumption, Bronchitis, Catarrh, Asthma, and all Throat and Lung Affections, also a positive and radical cure for Nervous Debility and all Nervous Complaints. Having tested its wonderful curative powers in thousands of cases, and desiring to relieve human suffering, I will send free of charge to all who wish it, this recipe, in German, French, or English, with full directions for preparing and using. Sent by mail by addressing, with stamp, naming this paper W. A. NOYES, 320 Power's Block, Rochester, N. Y.

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